



Creating an  **active**alliance

Conference Report Summary

→ Background

The 'Strategy for Sport in Essex' portrays a vision for the county - to take advantage of revolutionary changes within the structure of sport to ensure short term impact, whilst pointing the way forward for long term development.

It also identifies that the delivery of sport and physical activity needs to be properly coordinated through an effective partnership framework, if it is to impact on the lives of its entire people.

And it is the first of six action plans [which aim to deliver on a range of shared outcomes] within The Strategy for Sport in Essex; 'Identifying, brokering and strengthening strategic links', that sets the

marker for enabling effective partnership working through the creation of a family of 'Community Sports Networks'.

The 'Creating an **active**alliance' Conference provided an opportunity for local stakeholders to come together for the first time as representatives of the Essex Community Sports Network family, to positively influence the direction of the county partnership framework.

This 'Creating an **active**alliance' Report provides a record of delegate feedback and identified outcomes that will steer the short term impact and long term development of the partnership framework in Essex.

Workshop → Building a winning future together in Essex

This concluding workshop provided an opportunity for reflection of the outcomes identified within the themed workshops, focusing on the core purpose of the Conference – positively influencing the development of a county partnership framework.

Task One

What do you consider to be the most important factor in achieving an effective alliance?

- Good networking
- Good communication
- Creating a motivated partnership - willingness to work together
- A common, clear and defined purpose
- Clear objectives
- Influence and leverage
- Sharing of good practice and knowledge
- No duplication
- New partnerships
- Funding
- Data collection - shared achievements
- Influencing county development

Feedback from question one highlighted the need for a common **active**alliance purpose and direction to be established, which would build trust and create a motivated partnership from the outset. Group discussion reinforced the value delegates placed in achieving a positive and active network, with particular emphasis on sharing knowledge and good practice at every level. It was also agreed that the **active**alliance should provide a mechanism to influence the strategic direction of Sport in Essex and regionally.

Task Two

If the alliance had a vision statement, what would you like this to be?

- Creating a healthier Essex through active participation in sport
- United together to provide quality active opportunities for all
- A strong, effective and equitable alliance working in partnership to increase active participation across Essex
- Getting active together
- Partners in promoting participation
- Collaborative approach
- Increasing opportunity
- One goal
- Active
- United
- Inclusive
- Affordable
- Accessible
- Quality
- Enjoyable

A range of key words were offered for a vision statement, of which it was agreed that sport, physical activity and health were 'must haves'. Providing an equitable offer was also highlighted as a priority for all partners and that this message should be conveyed within the **active**alliance vision. Enjoy was perhaps conspicuous by its absence (only mentioned once), while united, together and partners were suggested as messages that might encapsulate the spirit of the alliance.

Task Three

Prioritise four areas from the following list (or alternatives) that the **active**alliance should support and describe why?

- Equality and Diversity ✓
- School/community club links ✓
- London 2012 ✓
- Increase physical activity ✓✓✓✓
- Funding support ✓
- Club development ✓✓
- Workforce development ✓✓✓
- Marketing and communications ✓✓✓
- Facility development ✓✓
- Effective Impact Measurement ✓✓✓
- Sustainability ✓

The spread of votes for priority areas represented the diversity of representation at the Conference but also highlights the wide range of skills and support mechanisms that the sport and physical activity sector utilises. The most popular theme was 'increase physical activity' and although only chosen once, delegates re-enforced the message that equality and diversity will be integral to all CSN actions. Similarly Marketing and Communications was not chosen by all groups as it was felt that this is an important requisite within all areas of work.

Task Four

How can the alliance support your chosen priorities (practically)?

- Influence and leverage
- Joint commissioning – strength in unity
- Sharing good practice
- Effective communication – finding gaps/excess resources
- Who is the active alliance – including NGB's?
- Looking at the bigger picture – CSN/Sport England
- Standardised templates for monitoring and evaluating
- Regular promotion/campaigns – marketing/promoting each others events
- Regular newsletter by email
- Signposting to activities – sportsex website
- Sharing resources, e.g. workforce
- Fill gaps in service
- Champion for each of the priorities
- Creating legacy/sustainability after 2012
- Advice on what funding streams are available
- Generic template production
- Regular information communication; newsletter/website?
- Creating champions

Three potential mechanisms emerged from this task concerning the supportive role of the **active**alliance in achieving shared success, which were; effective marketing and communication, sharing good practice and influencing and negotiating.

Task Five
What existing county networks could support/supplement CSN development?

- SDO forum
- NGB forum
- PDS forum
- ELBF – facility operational group
- Extended schools
- Community Clusters
- Building Schools for the Future
- Obesity alliance
- Essex CVS and Volunteer Centre networks
- Chief Executive Officers Association

It is clear from the number of stakeholder groups outlined – and others that were speculated – that the extent of the sport and physical activity network needs further mapping to clarify exactly what groups exist and the objectives that they support.

Delegates concluded that efficiency could be increased if as suspected, overlapping of objectives and resources was occurring. The value of CSN's acting as a one-stop-shop for local sport and physical activity strategy and delivery was re-enforced.

It was proposed and agreed by delegates that an **active**alliance Chairs Group, would provide the best vehicle for developing and coordinating the shared objectives of CSN partners.

Task Six
What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the following CSN partnerships? 1. Neighbour (1 local CSN partner) 2. Cluster (3/4 local CSN partners) 3. County (14 county CSN partners) 4. Best match (nearest regional ONS partner)

- Meeting for the sake of meeting
- Lack of time
- Matching up regional e.g. rural/urban demographics

→ Cost

→ Use the strengths of an alliance as and when needed and not just for the sake of it

Delegates opinionated preferences for each offer and concluded that there is undoubtedly value in partnership working and that utilising the strength of each of these at the right time will be critical to a successful [and effective] **activealliance**.

→ Outcomes

The 'creating an **activealliance** Conference' opening address asked how we could support and sustain the achievements of the county sport and physical activity partnership and challenged delegates to positively influence outcomes to the questions; what can we achieve, can we help each other achieve and how can we ensure that our whole equals more than the sum of our parts?

→ What can we achieve?

Ensuring effective links between strategy and delivery [the people behind the people] was identified as critical to achieving the target of increasing active participation 1% year-on-year and building the capacity of the sport and physical activity infrastructure.

Coordinating mass-participation events, piggy-backing on national campaigns and hosting larger cost-free activities were acknowledged as mechanisms for achieving 'participation impact' for the partnership, not least in raising awareness of the sport and physical activity offer – but that participation sustainability must be built-in to all provision to ensure long term success .

Increasing and improving the voluntary workforce was identified as a crucial development area, where traditional methods of recruitment and retention are struggling to meet a changing culture. Invigorating this offer is a challenge – but one that can better be supported holistically and in a coordinated way.

Ensuring equality of opportunity was a message reinforced throughout the Conference. Identified as a priority, this is perhaps one of several areas of development that is well supported at various levels and by many partnerships across the county – but where strategic development is perhaps still ad-hoc.

Delegates concluded that further mapping identifying relationships and strategic groups behind the sport and physical activity infrastructure would help identify strengths and weaknesses and support an improved equality offer.

→ Can we help each other achieve?

The message from the Conference is that the **activealliance** can - and should - act as a mechanism to support each CSN through the achievement of common goals and sharing of best practice.

→ How can we ensure that our whole equals more than the sum of our parts?

Each workshop reinforced the value that partners place in achieving a positive and active network in the county and identified that sharing knowledge, resource and skills will enable the achievement of shared outcomes.

Particular emphasis was placed on effective marketing and communication, sharing good practice and influencing and negotiating, with suggestions for achieving this including further

development of online resources and coordinating a programme of 'learning' opportunities.

It was agreed that the **activealliance** should represent the shared objectives of each local network and influence the strategic direction of Sport in Essex. It was also agreed that CSN Chairs are best placed to represent each network at a strategic level and steer the direction of the **activealliance**.

sportessex agreed to coordinate an **activealliance** Chairs meeting in the first instance, to support the achievement of outcomes identified from the Conference;

- Support club development through the sharing of knowledge and resource across geographical boundaries.
- Identify and share best practice across the network – including the provision of a case-study area on sportessex.com.
- Enable effective communication of local activity through the development and support of the events section on sportessex.com.
- Identify and affect exit routes for each CSN event.
- Develop a variety of marketing platforms for partners to share.
- Provide a 'one-stop-shop' new media resource for sports professionals and the community.
- Establish a regular grassroots newspaper sports supplement.
- Support Workforce Development within CSN action plans to support a long-term plan to address the barriers identified.
- Share all monitoring templates and evaluation results across the network.
- Conduct a sport and physical activity network mapping exercise with a view to aligning existing groups and/or objectives.