

## **Overview of the Physical Activity Alliance's achievements to date**

In early 2008 key organisations from across the physical activity sector first met to consider establishing a single powerful alliance to address the increasing social and economic cost of physical inactivity in England. These organisations recognised that each had expertise in particular areas, but that none possessed the entire solution. By joining forces they could provide a single point of contact for Government's efforts to address physical inactivity, greatly enhance their own reach, and crucially evaluate the success of interventions. The paragraphs below outline the achievements of the Alliance to date, driven through time contributed voluntarily by sector partners, and with minimal public funding.

### *1. Making connections*

Since its initial meetings the Physical Activity Alliance has grown to incorporate the majority of organisations with an interest in promoting physical activity. The Alliance brings together national organisations (e.g. sports governing bodies) with representatives of local deliverers (e.g. the Local Government Association). It enables those with research and evidence expertise (e.g. BHF National Centre for Physical Activity) to interact with practitioners (e.g. Fitness Industry Association). Prior to the establishment of the Alliance organisations with very similar goals but significantly different operational models (e.g. Sustrans and CCPR) had simply never met. The Physical Activity Alliance enables all of the above to extend their reach and influence.

### *2. Establishing consensus*

Early meetings of the Alliance were characterised by a recognition that all partners were delivering effectively within their own sphere, yet the full potential of this work was not being realised. The key question was to how to effectively harness existing expertise, share good practice and maximise impact. To find the answers to these questions the Alliance undertook a sector wide consultation to establish its role, remit and preferred governance model.

This consultation was unique in that it encompassed the breadth of the physical activity sector, rather than a particular segment (e.g. health clubs or active travel). In all the consultation considered input from 181 on line questionnaires, eleven letters, 23 personal interviews; 6 group discussions and a sector wide event reaching over 50 delegates. This exercise resulted in a clear mandate for the Alliance to represent the sector to government and policy makers, and by working through its partners to:

- Support the sector to put evidence-based physical activity interventions into practice
- Grow the capacity of the sector to deliver more
- Ensure effective coordination of delivery across the sector - preventing duplication

### *Enhancing delivery for partners and Government*

As outlined above the Physical Activity Alliance has brought together organisations that, whilst sharing very similar goals, had little previous contact. This has provided greater reach for the physical activity opportunities provided by these partners. For example active travel charity Sustrans is now in the process of uploading details on how to travel actively to sports venues. Similarly the Fitness Industry Association (FIA) was able to incorporate community dance

deliverers into the 'Lets Dance with Change4Life' project programme through its new found connections with CCPR and the Exercise Movement & Dance Partnership (EMDP).

As the second example illustrates, the Alliance also provides a single point of contact for Government departments seeking delivery partners for physical activity interventions. This proved crucial when the Department of Health recognised the potential for dance to increase levels of physical activity, and sought a lead partner to deliver its 'dance champions' project.

The Physical Activity Alliance through its objective of 'delivering through partners' (in this case EMDP) offered a single point of contact and project management to reach the dance sector, whilst also providing links to other delivery and coordination outlets. In addition to supporting a project to select mass participation event proposals, the Alliance has created through the project a directory of providers linked to a public facing website for those wishing to find a dance class.

### 3. *Strengthening Partnership*

Whilst a number of Alliance partners were already working together, they recognised the opportunity to improve and enhance existing work. For instance a range of partners have significant and successful projects to promote walking - yet the cumulative impact of this work has not been evaluated or promoted. These partners have taken initial steps to create a 'Walking Alliance' whose first task will be to identify the full range of projects in this area, and provide a coherent report on its impact. The Physical Activity Alliance will provide secretariat support to facilitate this work. Thus the Alliance is facilitating better knowledge of which interventions work and how they can be replicated.

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These benefits have been delivered prior to incorporation or the recruitment of paid staff. It is clear that with additional capacity the Alliance can greatly enhance existing work – and develop new and ground-breaking interventions through creative partnerships.

Physical Activity Alliance  
Interim Operational Board

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