

**System Maturity Matrix survey for Configurational Comparative Analysis
Evaluation of Sport England Physical Activity Programmes: Participant Information:
September 2026**

You are invited to take part in an activity as part of the Configurational Comparative Analysis Evaluation of Sport England Physical Activity Programmes. This includes a number of programmes supporting local areas which are adopting a Whole System Approach or a Place-Based Approach to increase population levels of physical activity and reduce inequalities in physical activity.

Researcher/ Research Team Details:

The Principal Investigator is Dr Katie Shearn from Sheffield Hallam University. The team also includes other NELP team members in SHU, Hartpury University, and in the other organisations in our consortium: Rob Vincent, Rick Davies, Substance and Collaborate CIC. (Please contact NELP@shu.ac.uk if you require more information on the organisations involved). You can contact the research team using any of the following methods:

Katie Shearn. Email: k.shearn@shu.ac.uk

Simon Armour. Email: s.armour@shu.ac.uk

What is the study about? Sport England (SE) encourages agencies and organisations to reduce inequalities in physical activity, by addressing barriers and opportunities at a range of different levels – from the individual to the structural. This is referred to as a ‘whole-systems’ (WSA) approach. When such an approach is rooted in the distinctive mix of local characteristics and insights of the people who live and work there, it is referred to as a place-based approach (PBA). We use the term Place-based Systemic Approach (PBSA) to mean a whole-system place-based approach.

Sport England have invested in a number of programmes to support local areas which are attempting to implement PBSAs. Sport England’s ten-year strategy, Uniting the Movement, commits to deepening the approach in places with established PBSAs and to expanding the place-based approach with further investment into new places. They also want to provide tools and resources for others who may be interested in such approaches but are not directly invested in. SHU is leading a National Evaluation and Learning Partnership to understand not only the impacts of these programmes but also the underlying causal pathways to the desired outcomes.

In each such location there is a complex social context, where there are many different organisations involved, and a diversity of relationships between these parties. This means there will be a multiplicity of causal pathways involved in any changes seen. As part of the NELP work, this project will undertake Configurational Comparative Analysis (CCA). This will utilise data collected as part of the wider programme, collected through a system maturity matrix, and will collect additional data about the social and demographic contexts in which local programmes are delivered, and the resources being invested in the localities. We will also collect data from programme representatives about their perceptions of the support provided by SE and NELP, and draw on available national datasets including Census, Public Health indicators and other governmental sources to produce composite indicators of conditions of interest. Following production of initial configurational outputs, we will

undertake sense-making workshops with groups of partnership representatives to further explore and validate or amend the findings, including investigation of causes of apparently contradictory patterns.

Why have I been invited to take part? You have been invited as a representative of your Place Partnership in this work. You are under no obligation to take part.

What will happen if I agree take part?

Survey Submission: We will ask you to respond to a questionnaire in online/digital format, on behalf of a wider group of those involved in your work. This will ask for information about the work of your partnership in relation to the Place-based Systemic Approach (PBSA) in your area, and the resources supporting this work. We will also ask you to share your perceptions or assessment of where your partnership stands in relation to a number of factors which may be important to understanding the development of your PBSA. This will include responding to a matrix which describes how we can assess the maturity of the WSA/PBA in your area in relation to different conditions, and providing brief explanations/examples to support your assessment.

Moderation meetings: We will arrange moderation meetings with representatives of participating Places, within regional clusters, where we will explore some of the conditions and your responses to the survey in relation to these, to help ensure consistency of interpretation across different places. We may also ask for further information and clarification by email where we feel the initial survey response provided insufficient information to assess maturity. The additional examples and explanations you give us will be added to the data and scores previously submitted.

Where will this take place?

Survey submission: As this is an online format, you will be able to complete the survey in your usual place of work and at a time to suit you, subject to a deadline for submission of responses which is set out in the survey documentation.

Moderation meeting: This will be an in-person meeting with representatives of three to five places within your regional SE cluster area. We will arrange these with you at a convenient and accessible location.

How much of your time will it take? It is difficult to specify how long the process will take as it depends on how easily you are able to access information requested, and whether you are responding individually or convening a group response. However, we would expect it to take between two and six hours.

What are the possible risks of taking part? We do not anticipate any risks to you in taking part in this study other than the time taken away from completing other tasks.

What are the possible benefits of taking part? The data from the survey will feed into the learning processes and may improve ways of working. The main benefit is that you can inform the ongoing SE work in relation to WSA/PBAs and be part of the learning process. This may help you to reflect on your own approaches and work.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential? Given the small number of stakeholders involved at this stage it will not be possible to keep your involvement confidential. However, the information you give to the researchers in the survey will be kept securely. Extracts of individual Place responses may be shared with Sport England in anonymised form but you will not be identified personally by name in any reports or

publications unless you give specific permission; however, we may refer to the specific locality in which you work in order to provide a useful account of the work. As a result, it may be possible to identify you due to the role you have and the limited number of people involved in the programme in your area. We will seek your permission to use any specific quotes where relevant.

On occasions, Sport England would like to draw examples of Place practice (at different levels of maturity) to bring to life the work, to inform Place-based innovation and learning support or for SE Board, DCMS, consultation responses and policy briefings. The survey questionnaire will ask whether you would like examples from your Place to be considered for this purpose, and if you would like to be named in this response to enable follow up. Your response to this option will have no bearing on your relationship with NELP or Sport England.

What will happen to the information when this study is over? The survey data collected by Sheffield Hallam University will be stored securely on protected servers and databases for ten years. Personal data will only be shared for the purpose of carrying out analysis. With your consent, the researchers may quote your words anonymously in publications. Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. If you withdraw from the study, we will keep the information about you that we have already obtained. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personally-identifiable information possible.

What will happen to the results of the survey? The data will be combined with other data sources to support us to explain what is working, for whom, and under what circumstances to enable active lives. At intervals (quarterly) findings will be shared with individuals working on the project, including the funder and sponsor. We also aim to share the learning with partners. We may use the data to inform reports and publications in academic journals and conferences.

How long is the whole study likely to last? The evaluation has an end date of March 2029

Who is organising and funding the research? The study has been organised by Sheffield Hallam University, as part of the National Evaluation and Learning Partnership. The evaluation is funded by Sport England.

Are there any expenses or payment involved? There are no expenses or payment involved in taking part in this study.

What do I have to do? If you are willing to take part in the study, please respond to this email or by telephone so that we can record your participation.

Details of who to contact if you have any concerns about/after the study are given below.

You should contact the Data Protection Officer if: • you have a query about how your data is used by the University • you would like to report a data security breach (e.g. if you think your personal data has been lost or disclosed inappropriately) • you would like to complain about how the University has used your personal data DPO@shu.ac.uk	You should contact the Head of Research Ethics (Dr Mayur Ranchordas) if • you have concerns with how the research was undertaken or how you were treated m.ranchordas@shu.ac.uk
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Address: Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WBT Telephone: 0114 225 5555

*The University undertakes research as part of its function for the community under its legal status. Data protection allows us to use personal data for research with appropriate safeguards in place under the legal basis of **public tasks that are in the public interest**. However, all University research is reviewed to ensure that participants are treated appropriately and their rights respected. This study was approved by Sheffield Hallam University Ethics Committee (Ethic Review ID: ER81231510). More information at <https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/excellence/ethics-and-integrity>*

The university's privacy notice for research participants is available at: <https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-research>

This information is for you to keep. Thank you for your time and help.