

ESSENCE

One page overview of each 'condition' for addressing inequalities in physical activity

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Collaboration



There is productive working around a common purpose.

What does this mean and why is it important?

Working with different organisations can help to drive innovative physical activity and/or inequalities policy and practice by drawing on different skill sets and networks. By reducing duplication and pooling resources, collaborative efforts can amplify impact. Working with organisations, as well as different departments in larger institutions, can support shared problem solving and unravel contradictions in local settings that may inhibit physical activity or exacerbate inequalities.

Sector integration of physical activity: Partners working across varied sectors including health, education, transport, planning, community and housing, agree on how to make resources work effectively to tackle physical activity inequalities. This is built on finding a broader agenda and pooling ideas and resources whilst avoiding siloed working. There is work to change policies and practices which may discourage or prevent people from being active and work to reduce unhelpful competition between local organisations.

Strengthening individual and community capacities: Voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations are supported to incorporate physical activity into their activities in line with their goals. Local networks of organisations work together to build assets, address shared challenges, and advocate for change. By working together, individuals can unite communities, engage seldom heard people, mobilise organisations, and influence strategic leaders to provide support.

Tackling structural inequalities: Organisations show commitment to tackle root causes of inequalities, even when this isn't their core business. There are diverse efforts and more explicit strategies addressing underlying inequalities, equitably distributing resources and developing assets that support local people to thrive in ways that they value, including being active.

How can we create collaboration within and across organisations?

- 1. Recognition of a shared purpose:** Appreciation of the scale and complexity of the challenge leads to conviction that collaboration is essential.
- 2. Mutual understanding, respect, and reciprocity:** Building a deep understanding of each other's objectives, roles, resources, strengths, and constraints, fosters a balanced and respectful relationship between partners. This mutual respect may require partners to occasionally relinquish power and see how their own and others priorities may both be part of a wider common purpose.
- 3. Honesty:** Effective collaborations require not only on friendly relations and alignment, but also challenging discussions to address issues that are not working and require change.
- 4. Resilience, fuelled by comradery:** Tackling inequalities is hard work and requires persistence. Working together boosts morale and bravery in actions.
- 5. Fluidity and self-organisation.** Collaboration based on personal relationships may be fragile if people move on. Embedded processes for collaboration between organisations and fluidity across a network of partners fosters the endurance of long-term partnerships.

Reflection questions

- Is there a widespread belief that collaboration is important to tackle physical activity inequalities?
- Who is included in collaborative arrangements, and how can you ensure equitable representation of diverse interests?
- Are there examples of collaborative work that is tackling some of the difficult/ contradictory / entrenched issues in place?
- How resilient to change are partnerships across your place?