

YMCA England

24 September 2014

YMCA Federation's response to
Public Health England's
'Everyone Active, Everyday'
Consultation

YMCA is committed to creating healthy, sustainable communities where all individuals can lead active lives and fulfil their potential in body, mind and spirit. The YMCA believes that the promotion and delivery of physical activity plays a vital role in delivering this aspiration.

YMCA is the largest voluntary sector provider of activities and services that promote health and wellbeing in England. YMCA is also the largest provider of fitness training in the UK fitness industry.

YMCA works with all individuals across communities and have particular expertise in engaging with young people and others from traditionally 'hard to reach' groups. 712,000 children and adults are getting active with the YMCA – as we specialise in welcoming and supporting all members of the community to become healthy, happy and fit.

Following the publication of Public Health England's consultation, the YMCA national body, YMCA England, carried out a consultation of the 114 YMCAs across England on the 'Everyone Active, Everyday' paper. Their comments and feedback form the basis of this response.

1. Is there recently published evidence not included in the document that should be?

None

2. Are there additional actions that Public Health England (PHE), as a system leader, could enable to support you and your organisation to implement the framework?

- Consider simplifying the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) guidelines on physical activity (or at least have simpler public facing guidelines supported by the existing quantifiable guidelines). Whilst these guidelines may often be communicated to the public by professionals they should be aimed and understood by everyone. Currently the use of words such as 'vigorous', 'moderate' and 'aerobic' present a barrier to a lay person understanding exactly what is required and also the guidelines still suggest that they are talking about 'hot and sweaty' sports or activity.

Domain - 'Moving Professionals'

- Ensure that across sectors, physical activity is not a 'nice to have' but is a 'must have.' It is not an addition to the constituents that make up our daily lives but underpins everything from educational achievement, better life

chances, business productivity, the green agenda, personal and social economic performance etc. Too often physical activity is seen as an afterthought. This needs to change to recognise that activity is the core element that should run through all sectors and services. To this end it is felt the PHE should be advocating to ensure that, whilst existing physical activity networks are supported, all networks across all sectors should have a duty to address physical activity.

- As deliverers of commissioned health and wellbeing projects, including interventions to reduce inactivity, YMCA feels that there should be better understanding and training across health professionals of the importance of physical activity. It should not be right that a GP can complete their medical training without a specific element of their education focussing on the positive impact that physical activity has on both physical and mental health. Advocating that physical activity is part of the General Medical Services (GMS) contract, not just as part of a pathway for combating cardiovascular disease or hypertension for example. We still don't have a high enough percentage of health professionals accepting and advocating the role that physical activity can play in the prevention and treatment of illnesses.

Domain – 'Active Society'

- In creating an 'Active Society' it is important to create a cultural shift away from the thinking that physical activity is just for healthy people. This cultural shift needs to run through all forums including media, policy, education and business. The 'Everybody Active, Everyday' paper is right that it needs to become embedded in everyday routine and as a community organisation YMCA would advocate a bottom up approach where individuals, local associations and community groups feel compelled to lead this change. The message is better articulated and championed by the community themselves rather than parachuting in an 'outsider' who does not have the local experience or relationships developed.

Domain – Active lives: creating the right environments

- YMCA agrees that the communities where people live and the built environment are vital in supporting increased levels of physical activity. More is needed to encourage planning for cycle parking, workplace showers and infrastructure on the high street that encourages walking and cycling as part of the everyday routine. In order to foster this change, research and guidance on the business cases for organisations to invest in the infrastructure changes needed, has to be developed.

Domain – Moving at scale

- YMCA has recently mapped out its conceptual thinking on supporting healthy communities and there are many similarities with the information outlined in the 'Moving at Scale' domain. For example, work has taken place with clearly

defined neighbourhoods that list and score the existing assets within that community along with detailing the comments from residents about what it needs to make that asset work. Maximising and investing in these assets would be a significantly better use of public funds than simply creating new ones. This concept of community audit requires support from across different sectors and for them to buy in to the idea that increasing physical activity is everyone's business. Support on influencing different sectors and auditing communities would be welcomed.

3. Is there any additional information or guidance that might support on-going work to embed sustained action to address physical activity levels?

- As a community organisation YMCA supports the notion that physical activity needs to become a routine part of daily life that is embedded within the culture of our society. We also believe in the power of local communities and utilising the assets within those communities. Citizens should not be passive recipients of services but should be engaged and empowered to feel a self-determination over what is happening in their locality.
- It is felt that whilst local Community Sports Partnerships are valuable in leading the messaging and action locally, time and support needs to be given to other networks and agencies that are not overtly sport to ensure that advocacy and action crosses all sectors. We need to encourage non-traditional agencies and networks to become physical activity champions.

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