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LEARNING IN ACTION EXAMPLES

from the Essex Local Delivery Pilot

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eldp Essex Local Delivery Pilot
in partnership with

Essex County Council

ActiveEssex

SPORT ENGLAND

Tendring District Council

Colchester

Basildon Council
BASILDON · BILLERICAY · WICKFORD

Introduction

This document depicts two practical local examples of learning in action, which have occurred within the context of the Essex Local Delivery Pilot (LDP). These examples include details of the ingredients of how these worked, with the intention that other LDPs can learn from them. To illuminate and frame the contained learning we have used Driscoll's (2007) experiential learning cycle. The cycle provides three trigger questions:
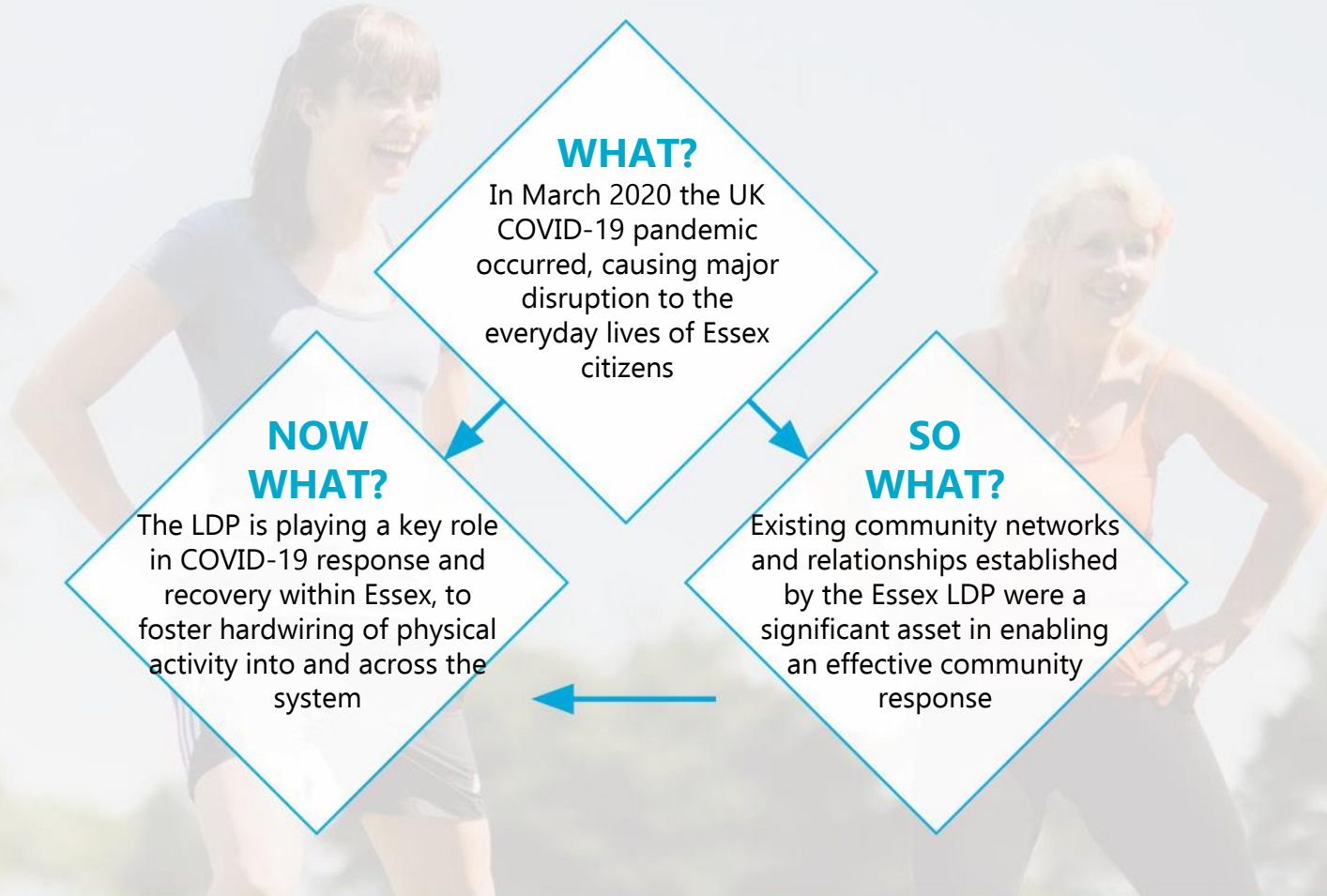
What? A description of the activity/intervention and purposeful reflection on selected aspects of that experience

So what? An analysis of the activity/intervention, discovering what learning arises from the process of reflection

Now what? Proposed actions following the intervention/activity, applying the new learning from that experience

Note: Italicised words and phrases represent connections with the priorities and ways of working depicted in the LDP on a Page (see main body of Process Evaluation Report for a copy).

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1. Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

WHAT?
In March 2020 the UK COVID-19 pandemic occurred, causing major disruption to the everyday lives of Essex citizens

NOW WHAT?
The LDP is playing a key role in COVID-19 response and recovery within Essex, to foster hardwiring of physical activity into and across the system

SO WHAT?
Existing community networks and relationships established by the Essex LDP were a significant asset in enabling an effective community response

1. Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

What? In March 2020 there was abrupt and significant disruption to people's everyday lives when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the UK. The immediate crisis presented a particular challenge to deprived communities, where a significant proportion of the population are marginalised and isolated. In Essex, re-deployment of the three LDP community co-ordinators to community hubs, alongside Active Essex Relationship Managers, enabled them to actively assist in their local community response to COVID-19. This involved them in the distribution of food packages, medication, and residents packs, which included guidance in relation to physical activity. The LDP recognised the risk of a considerable number of physical activity investments being paused in the wake of the pandemic, which had the potential to create a funding gap and threaten the sustainability of organisations, as well as much needed provision of activities. During this time the State of Life survey was launched, to capture shifts in physical activity, life circumstances, and well-being during the COVID-19 outbreak - a collaboration between University of Essex, Jump, Reason Digital and Active Essex.

So what? It quickly became apparent that the relationships and *collaborations* that the LDP had worked hard to establish, within and across the Essex system, were a considerable asset within in the immediate COVID-19 community response. It facilitated *collaboration and communication* between community organisations and the local authorities, so that a meaningful and timely response to various citizen needs could be provided. This aligned with the LDP priority to *support local residents and community groups to create their own ideas and solutions.* To address the potential funding gap community providers were encouraged to amend existing funding applications and/or submit new applications that directly responded to local needs arising from the pandemic, and the funding approval process was streamlined to enable it to be more responsive. Data collected with State of Life was shared to enable further informed action to take place and helped frame key priorities for action.

Now what? The LDP is continuing to play a key role with the continuing Covid-19 response and COVID-19 recovery. To aid this the Active Essex has recently launched a Shaping the Future consultation document, which provides a clear position on the impact of COVID-19 on participation in sport, and physical activity and makes a call for action to make physical activity a priority for the future for everyone within the context of a *whole system approach.* The aim is to *hardwire physical activity into the system, and across the system* at a time when physical activity is a high priority to help in the response to COVID-19 (for example, in the creation of *active environments to make better use of local physical assets*, as conventional indoor physical activity spaces may be unavailable due to COVID-19 measures. Further, consultation is taking place enabling the Essex LDP to continue its work of *understanding the needs and resources of local communities* and potentially upscaling and replicating successful initiatives.

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1. Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

"Due to the local connectivity, knowledge and relationships developed through LDP work, the local response was swift and effective to those in need."   LDP staff member

"With the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, we could not gather together to start the Zumba & Tai-Chi sessions after we had received the funding from LDP. However, after brainstorming we came up with carrying on with the sessions as planned doing it online using the Zoom app. Although this meant going to some members houses to set them up and demonstrating how to use the app, it was still very worthwhile as is meant we could run the sessions."
                                                                                        LDP micro-grant lead

"COVID-19 - which has made us rethink our whole way of working both inside and outside the LDP, and in particular how you support communities to come together and be active when by definition you cannot bring them together!"
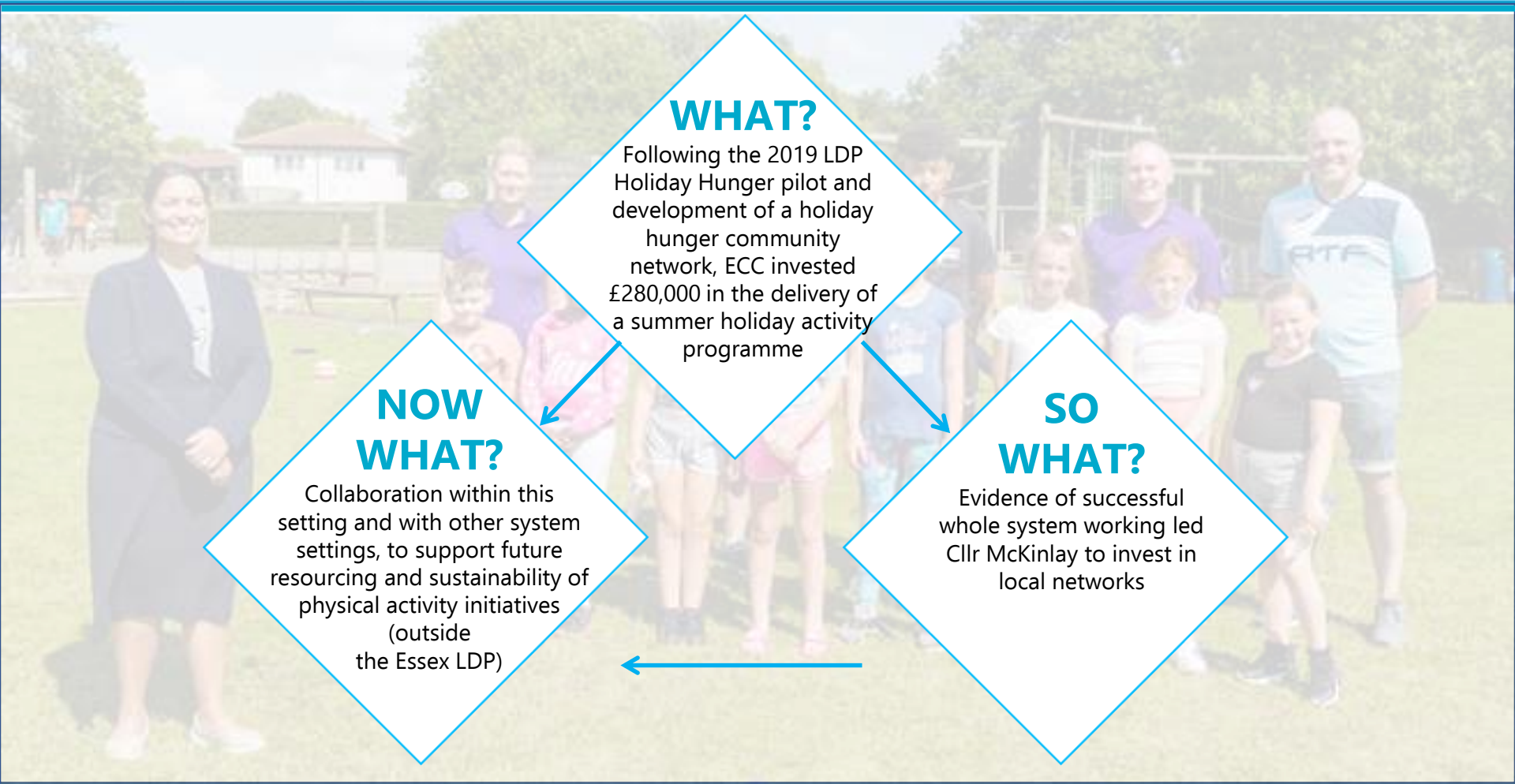   LDP staff member

" The insight provided by State of Life gave balance to ECC's emergency response work and helped to frame its recovery strategy – allowing senior stakeholders to identify and frame key priorities for action. Alastair Gordon,

Head of Profession Research & Citizen Insight, Essex county Council

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2. From Holiday Hunger to Holiday Activity Clubs

WHAT?

Following the 2019 LDP Holiday Hunger pilot and development of a holiday hunger community network, ECC invested £280,000 in the delivery of a summer holiday activity programme

NOW WHAT?

Collaboration within this setting and with other system settings, to support future resourcing and sustainability of physical activity initiatives (outside the Essex LDP)

SO WHAT?

Evidence of successful whole system working led Cllr McKinlay to invest in local networks

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2. From Holiday Hunger to Holiday Activity Clubs

What?   School holidays present pressure points for some families due to increased costs of food, childcare and activities. Children in disadvantaged families and those children who are eligible for free school meals are at risk of poorer nutrition, lower physical activity and social isolation during school holidays. To address this issue, the Active Essex Foundation, supported by Active Essex and the Essex LDP, adopted a ***whole systems approach*** to tackle holiday hunger and physical inactivity, which was delivered and evaluated as the Holiday Hunger pilot in the 2019 summer holiday period. Active Essex and Essex County Council then went on to design and deliver a major new summer holiday activity club programme to support working families across Essex during the school summer holidays of 2020.   Active Essex ***collaborated*** with a network of locally trusted organisations across Essex to deliver the free summer activity clubs from Monday 27th July 2020. Each club ran for five days per week for at least four hours per day, providing a range of sport and physical activities and a healthy packed lunch. This comprehensive package for working families is the largest ever in Essex and thought to be the first of its kind in the country.

So what? What was significant about the funding support for this initiative was that it resulted from the well-designed pilot with robust evidence, demonstrating a ***whole systems approach***. This encouraged Cllr McKinlay to ***invest funding into this network and into sport and physical activity.*** She invested £260,000 and through this 22,850 free places were provided across the summer and every child attending was given a free packed lunch. In particular it built on ***learning*** acquired and specifically actioned a recommendation in the Holiday Hunger pilot evaluation report, in terms of investing in ***whole systems thinking and community collaborations*** to allow Holiday Hunger and other physical activity projects to enhance their reach, service delivery and impact in a sustainable and scalable manner.

Now what?   The use of a ***whole systems approach*** has demonstrated what can be achieved, and this now needs to be further ***scaled up and replicated***, to enable ***physical activity to be hardwired into the system and across the system***. The upscaling of the number of holiday hunger programmes in each area, particularly those areas that are high in deprivation, are planned. Although future funding may be actively sought in the future, a focus is also to encourage other system settings to enable the ***realignment of budgets***. Using the ***learning,*** about how and what, has worked well (and not so well) within this initiative will foster further successful activities and initiatives both in this system and others.

2. From Holiday Hunger to Holiday Activity Clubs

"...we wouldn't have been able to do [the Holiday Activity Clubs] *without the support from Active Essex because you obviously used your links and relationships within the community, you obviously knew who those groups were who were already up and running, checked (in terms of safety checks etc) being to identify locations, meant that in very short space of time we were able to mobilise community partners to be able to deliver the programme across the whole county. I think in fact, from the day we got the numbers of the bubbles etc there was actually 10 days, and it wouldn't have been possible without Active Essex [...] We knew people um from a parent perspective were in some cases trying to get back to work they didn't have the same opportunities for childcare if paid in other summer camp opportunities or with grandparents who were maybe still shielding. So we had a very specific set of circumstances and it was about us responding to that and making sure what we were offering was relevant to people there and then. And I think that is why summer camps were such a success, you're right it is about timing and having a clear narrative on what we're trying to achieve and looking at what is needed... What is it that people need or want, it doesn't have to be a need. How do you tap into that and make it meaningful for people's lives?*

Councillor Louise McKinlay, Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Families and Children

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References

Driscoll, J. (2007) Practising Clinical Supervision: A Reflective Approach for Healthcare Professionals. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Bailliere Tindall Elsevier

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