



**Building better
communities**
from 2014 -2020

Forewords



I'm so proud of what our ParkLives programme achieved over the last six years in communities up and down GB, from Aberdeen to Plymouth and from Swansea to Southend. What started as a community legacy project for physical activity after the London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games, then evolved through the experience of our partnerships to become a holistic community intervention, championing the innate wellbeing benefits of green space but also celebrating the extraordinary qualities of local people. Session leaders who have invited and encouraged others, perhaps among the least confident of participants, to join in and make friends in their neighbourhoods. Participants of all ages and walks of life who have discovered activities which have nurtured their mental and physical wellbeing, but also their feelings of fellowship and belonging. It is fantastic to look at some of ParkLives' remarkable impacts and outcomes and I extend my thanks to everyone who has been involved over the years.

Jon Woods
General Manager, Coca-Cola Great Britain & Ireland



My passion is about ensuring everyone has access to sport and physical activity and I was very fortunate to see firsthand how ParkLives has played a significant role in reaching some of the most disadvantaged communities across the country. I urge others to look at Coca-Cola Great Britain's model of partnering directly with local authorities and charities, such as StreetGames, in order to have the greatest impact in supporting communities most in need.

Tracey Crouch MP
Member of Parliament for Chatham and Aylesford and Minister for Sport, Civil Society and Loneliness (2015 –2018)



ukactive has been delighted to be a partner of Coca-Cola Great Britain for the last six years, helping the programme reach more than half a million people and deliver more than a million visits. The reach is impressive, but it's when you delve into who the programme has reached that you see the real impact of ParkLives: supporting people with complex mental health problems to get the benefits of being active in the outdoors; helping those who otherwise feel isolated and cut off from society find a purpose; and supporting people with disabilities and health issues to feel welcomed within their communities.

Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE
ukactive Chair

What was ParkLives?

Coca-Cola Great Britain believes it is the right thing to do to invest in the communities where the company operates.

Born in 2014, as part of the Coca-Cola legacy from the London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games, ParkLives operated as a unique public-private partnership between Coca-Cola Great Britain and local authorities in 10 cities: Birmingham, Newcastle, London Borough of Newham, Manchester, Nottingham, Glasgow, Stoke-on-Trent, Dundee, Southampton & Swansea and to a further 50 locations through our charity partner, StreetGames, delivering free activities in parks for communities where it mattered most.

This was a trailblazing partnership programme, not a sponsorship. ParkLives was created as an enduring asset that could benefit those most in need in the heart of disadvantaged communities.

Coca-Cola took a bold approach in setting up ParkLives at a time where money was being taken out of sport and physical activity delivery and maintenance of parks. I cannot stress how important this was that these sessions were offered for free, allowing local communities to design what worked for them at the right times and places.

Karen Creavin
Chief Executive, Active Wellbeing Society and ParkLives Birmingham

Over 50 different types of free sessions delivered in the community

 Nordic Walking	 Rounders	 Couch to 5K	 Den Building	 Buggy Mums	 Tai Chi
 Tennis	 Yoga	 Zumba	 Family Fun	 Skateboarding	 Rollerskating

...and many more

Why did Coca-Cola Great Britain do this?

The Coca-Cola Company has a long heritage of breaking down barriers and bringing people together and felt there was a role to play at a time when local authority budgets across sports and recreation, parks and green spaces and public health were all being squeezed. On top of the struggle for access to green space, Coca-Cola Great Britain recognised that 40% of adults were already doing less than the recommended amount of physical activity, a particular issue in Britain's most deprived areas.

ParkLives went beyond addressing the inactivity crisis: loneliness affects a person's mental and physical health, increasing the risk of premature death by 30%. From women-only Tai Chi, to Walking Football for the over 50's, local residents had the opportunity to come together, make new friends locally, feel part of their community and enjoy free and fun activities, whilst creating job opportunities in some of the Britain's most deprived areas, through training more than 250 session leaders.

Building blocks of success

 <p>People should be free to choose what to participate in</p>	 <p>Break down barriers: including time and cost</p>
 <p>Being physically active should be free from stigma</p>	 <p>We feel at our most free when we're in the great outdoors</p>

The history of ParkLives

- **July – September 2012:** Coca-Cola partnership supports the biggest show on Earth – the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games
- **October 2012:** Brainstorms are held to develop legacy plans from the Games, with extensive stakeholder consultations
- **Spring 2013:** Research and development continues. The team meets Birmingham City Council to discuss their Active Parks pilot and the seed of an idea grows
- **Spring 2014:** Coca-Cola Great Britain launches ParkLives with its first local authority partners in Birmingham, Newcastle and the London Borough of Newham
- **Spring 2015:** Nottingham, Glasgow and Manchester join ParkLives
- **September 2015/16:** ParkLives is taken into Parliament to showcase the work it brings to communities
- **Spring 2016:** Coca-Cola Great Britain's longstanding partners, StreetGames, start to deliver a bespoke model of ParkLives through their doorstep sports club network. ParkLives launches in Swansea (and neighbouring Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend), Southampton, Dundee and Stoke-on-Trent
- **2018:** ParkLives celebrates 1,000,000 attendances
- **June 2019:** ParkLives wins Gold for Best Community involvement during a CSR programme, and Silver for most effective long-term commitment at the Corporate Engagement Awards
- **December 2019:** Coca-Cola Great Britain's ParkLives programme finishes. Birmingham to deliver the programme until December 2020

Where has ParkLives operated?



The wider outcomes of the programme:

Supporting physical wellbeing

According to the World Health Organization, inactivity is the fourth leading mortality risk in the UK with one in six dying too young because they do not sustain an active enough lifestyle¹. ParkLives provided more than **54,000 opportunities to be active** for free in community green spaces.

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Bringing ParkLives to Dundee has enabled us to take activities right to the heart of our communities. Some of these communities can be hard to reach and often don't participate in activities we run in our gyms and leisure centres. Taking fun and free activities right to their doorsteps has enabled us to target people most in need of support to improve their health and well-being and is making a huge difference to the lives of many of our participants.

Graham Wark
Head of Leisure and Sports Service, Leisure and Culture Dundee

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I was suffering from arthritis in both knees and could hardly walk. ParkLives Tai Chi sessions have helped to improve my posture, balance, strength and co-ordination. The sessions have many health benefits. It makes me feel happier, healthier and fitter, by having good body balance.

Mary, Tai Chi participant
ParkLives Newham

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I'm so thankful that ParkLives has come to Southampton, allowing mothers like me the ability to get out of the house, get fit, socialise and make new friends and best of all it is free which means mums on maternity pay or lower income can join in! I feel this has so many advantages and benefits; such as improving health levels of mums, which in turn will encourage to improve the health and fitness of baby/child. I feel this is even able to reduce the risk of a mum getting postnatal depression.

Buggyfit participant
ParkLives Southampton

The wider outcomes of the programme:

Improving mental health

One in four people in the UK suffer a mental health issue. However evidence from mental health charity Mind² shows that being active in the outdoors can both prevent and help alleviate mental health issues. ParkLives was a support for people who were having personal challenges and provided an important step in the right direction.

“

What an amazing programme! For so many months I watched from my window as people gathered on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Cotteridge Park not finding the strength to go out and joining them, always finding a really rubbish excuse! This time I made it. It's actually changed my life. Not only am I running 5k now but my confidence and mental health has improved too. Nobody recommended this course to me, the doctors said there was nothing else that could be offered to me, they just wanted to push medication.

Couch to 5k participant
ParkLives Birmingham

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I've been working alongside a counsellor for many years for my mental health but never seemed to get better. These walks have really helped my confidence and social skills. I feel so good about myself. Thank you.

Joy, Walking participant
ParkLives Manchester

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If I could do this walk every day I would; it's the only time I get out as I struggle with depression. Everything seems just fine when I am on the walk. Laura gets us chatting, doing exercises and stretches; it's just fabulous.

Janine, Walking participant
ParkLives Manchester

2 www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/nature-and-mental-health/how-nature-benefits-mental-health/#.Xh8pexdKiAw



The wider outcomes of the programme:

Improving self-confidence and reducing loneliness

Loneliness, living alone and poor social connections are as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day³ and increases the risk of early death by 29%⁴. ParkLives delivered a range of lower intensity activities, which work with groups most at risk of loneliness and isolation, such as new mums and older adults.

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I would like to thank the Swansea ParkLives team for the excellent service you give with supplying free exercise classes at lunchtime for me and the general public in Swansea. It has helped me in so many ways. I lost my father last year and going to these classes helped me to get through this very difficult time. It gave me something to look forward to in the week. It kept my mind occupied and gave me strength. It helped me to feel good about myself and nourished my general wellbeing. I am back in work now and find the opportunity to keep fit in my lunchtime means I have better mental and physical health when at work. I much appreciate this service and think it is a wonderful opportunity for people to keep fit mentally, emotionally and physically all year around.

Fiona, Circuits participant
ParkLives Swansea

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ParkLives is great, I'm new to the city and it's meant I can come and meet new people and make friends which is important to me. This ParkLives session has been a lifeline otherwise I would have met nobody.

Homeless World Cup participant
ParkLives Glasgow

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The social side of the activities is just as important as the exercise and it's really helped me feel not so alone after being at home with a baby.

Active Push participant
ParkLives Newcastle

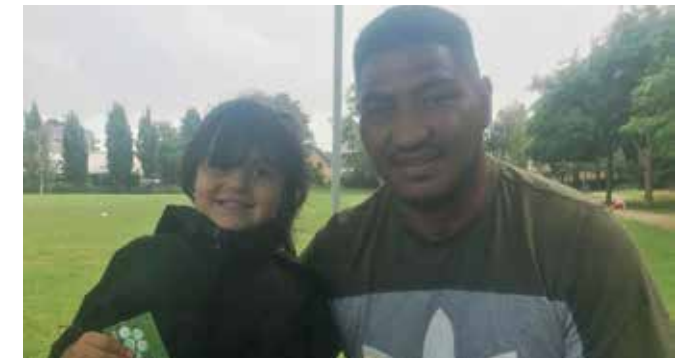
3 (Holt-Lunstad, 2010) 4 (Holt-Lunstad, 2015)



The wider outcomes of the programme:

Developing community trust and intergenerational play

According to a Government survey in 2018⁵, adults who feel people in their local area can be trusted, who regularly chat to their neighbours or who feel like they belong to their neighbourhood were less likely to say they often feel lonely. ParkLives focused on helping building a sense of community in those areas which have suffered the most from reduction of local budgets over the years.



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When I first attended sessions at the Northam Community Centre, I felt a bit of an outsider. I worked hard to build trust and rapport with the participants which has helped build a community around the Centre and the two weekly ParkLives sessions that are delivered there. There were a group of troublesome teenagers that caused problems during sessions initially, but over time they became more trusting of our team and started getting involved in sessions themselves and have now engaged with the weekly youth clubs delivered at the Centre.

The Wednesday Netball session is attended by young girls and mums between the ages of 10-60. They have integrated with one another and the younger ones have learnt more about their community.

Alice, Community Activator and Netball session leader
ParkLives Southampton

What made you initially go to try the sessions out?

To help build my daughter's social skills, and to get her more active.

Why do you enjoy the sessions?

Because they encourage my daughter to make friends and become more sociable. They also help me as a single parent to build friendships and to be a part of my local community.

What made you go back?

The staff are very friendly. There is also a good range of different activities, which allows my daughter to explore her abilities in different sports.

How has it made a positive impact/difference to your lifestyle?

It has helped to build up the confidence of both my daughter and I. It has helped to build our social networks in the community, and it has improved my mental health by giving me something positive to focus my mind on.

What barriers and setbacks have you overcome to succeed?

Having no family, and now building relations with other families as a support network, all through meeting other parents at ParkLives.

Aaron Hernandez, participant
ParkLives Newham

5 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/771482/Community_Life_Survey_Focus_on_Loneliness_201718.pdf



Case Study: ParkLives with StreetGames

StreetGames is a charity which, through its national network of trusted community providers, harnesses the power of sport and physical activity to create positive change in the lives of disadvantaged young people right across the UK.

ParkLives with StreetGames gave young people and families living in disadvantaged areas the opportunity to access parks in their local communities through a variety of games or physical activities, including football, street golf and fitness. It also aimed to equip participants with the skills, knowledge and confidence to access their local parks regularly and independently.

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Antisocial behaviour has decreased in the local area and many of the young people who have been well known to the local police force have engaged. They have been able to form positive relationships with staff members and are now seen as community role models. ParkLives has played a vital role in the local community. With cutbacks and limited resources, young people have had limited opportunities to participate in structured activities.

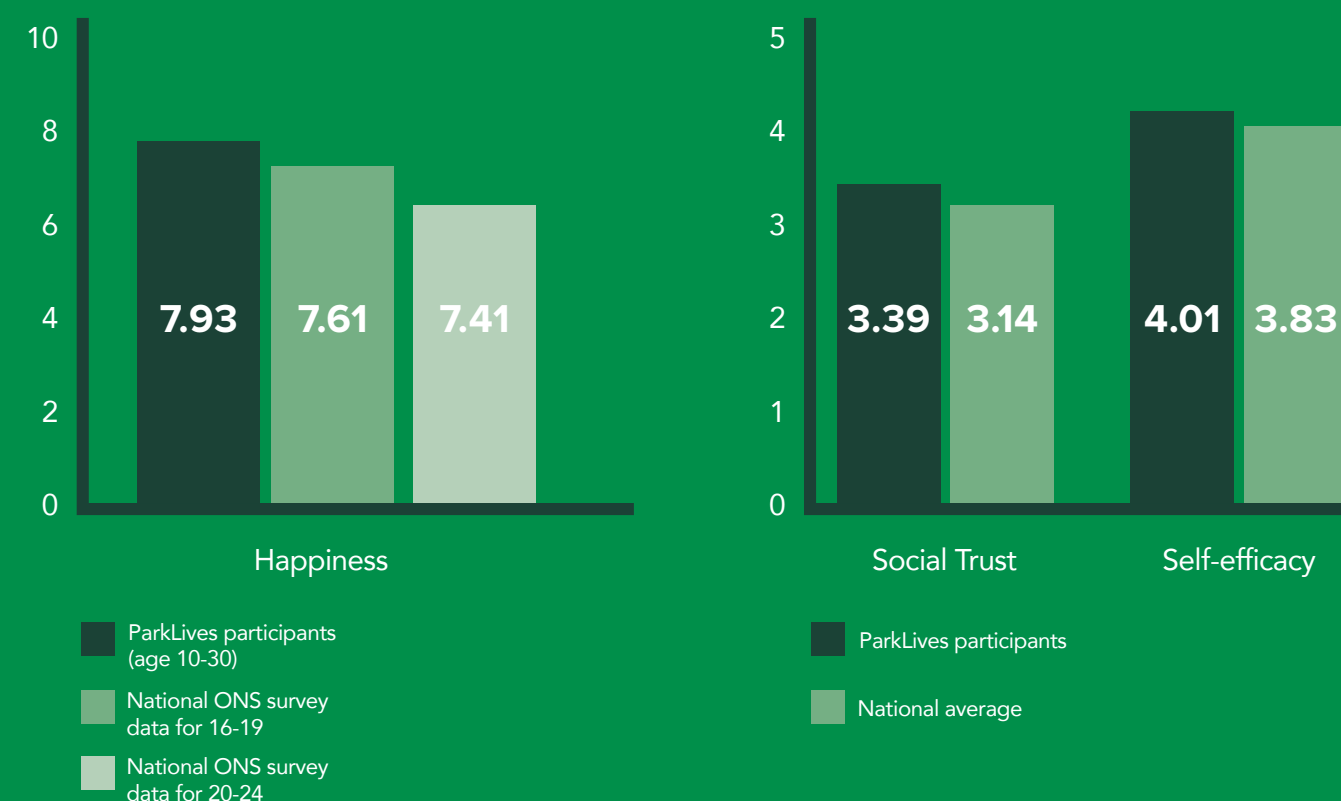
Paul Flannery
ParkLives StreetGames Lead for Livewire
Warrington

“

The sessions have given a lot of the youths in this area something to do over the summer as parents can't afford to send their kids to holiday camps or to do different activities. It created a buzz in some of the local parks.

Naomi Crolla
ParkLives StreetGames Lead for
Muirhouse Youth Development Group
Edinburgh

ParkLives StreetGames participants were happier, have greater social trust and self-efficacy than the national average



99% felt more motivated to engage in activities now

99% were more active now than before their first session

91% made new friends

97% felt more confident now than before their first session

90% felt that they were better at working in a team after attending ParkLives sessions

93% felt they are better able to communicate

95% felt they get on better with other young people as a result of attending

90% felt like they get on better with adults as a result of attending

85% felt they have better leadership skills as a result of attending

77% learnt things that will make them more employable

95% also wanted to see more done in parks and green spaces to support young people

The key outcomes

The ParkLives Winning Formula



ParkLives' key appealing factors

(Mediacom research, 2016)



Participation from 2014 - 2019



The programme also connected with a diverse audience



Birmingham	Manchester
41% ParkLives participants were Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME)	32% ParkLives participants were BAME
42% City average for BAME participation	16% City average for BAME participation
65% ParkLives participants lived in communities from the top 20% of deprivation in England	87% ParkLives participants were female
25% of Birmingham Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the top 20% of deprivation in England	51% City average for female participation
	46% ParkLives participants were aged over 50
	30% City average for over 50 participation

ParkLives supported increased life satisfaction



Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?

0=not at all satisfied and 10=completely satisfied ■ ParkLives □ City Average

ParkLives inspired people to be active as part of their daily lives

76% of participants felt like ParkLives had prompted them to be more active outside the programme (ukactive ParkLives participant wellbeing survey, 2019)

ParkLives helped people feel better connected

90% of participants felt like they have a sense of belonging in their community

62% of people over 16 in England felt like they strongly belonged in their neighbourhoods

(source: Community Life Survey, ONS, 2019)

84% of participants said ParkLives was a good way to meet new people and socialise

45% of adults in England feel lonely 'always' or 'sometimes/occasionally'

(source: Community Life Survey, ONS, 2017)

Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder advocacy was one of the key factors to ParkLives' success. ParkLives came to Parliament to engage MPs for participating and non-participating constituencies; as well as inviting local councillors, coordination teams, session leaders and participants to showcase the great work they were doing.

Local engagement events also proved to be successful. For example the Southampton ParkLives team delivered a hotly contested Labour vs. Conservative Councillor Rounders match!

“

It was great to take part in the ParkLives in Parliament event. ParkLives offer great opportunities for free outdoor activities in Glasgow and I would encourage everyone to take up the opportunity to get fit and have fun.

Alison Thewliss
Member of Parliament for Glasgow Central

“

I don't think people realise how hard we work for our residents and it's so nice to see everyone come together for an event like this. We've had representatives of all ages and all sporting abilities.

Satvir Kaur
Southampton Councillor

“

It was great to see all the cities come together and showcase what they've been doing. It was a great opportunity to show MPs what ParkLives is and the importance of getting people active, outdoors and using their parks.

Nicole Napier, Team Leader
ParkLives Newham



Local benefits:

Unlocking green spaces

According to the Heritage Lottery Fund, 92% of park managers had seen budgets cut and 95% were facing more reductions⁶. Local authorities now have no statutory responsibility to invest in their parks and green spaces. This has led to many becoming run down and no longer safe community spaces for being active. ParkLives looked to address this by strengthening the role of parks as beneficial and enjoyable community assets.

Case Study: Sparkhill Community, Birmingham

Over the 2019 summer holiday, Project Brum, as part of ParkLives Birmingham, staff delivered a weekly multisport session at Sparkhill Park. On first arrival, the team were shocked to see the amount of litter around the park. In speaking to participants and passers-by, it became clear that this was a barrier preventing people from enjoying their local green space.

After the first session, the ParkLives team contacted members of the community who brought litter pickers to the next session. This quickly became the main attraction of the weekly multisport sessions, with children arriving early, eager to clean up their park. Once they'd filled a bag, they measured their achievements using luggage scales.

In the final week, they held a sports day event, which included running races, archery and stone painting competitions. There was also an award for the "best litter picker", and everyone received a community award.



Before

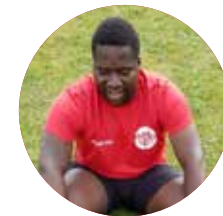


After

Local benefits:

Increasing skills

Research from the British Chambers of Commerce reveals that twelve million people – the combined population of London, Greater Manchester and Staffordshire – will be without a job or will be in a job they are over-qualified for by 2024⁷. More than 250 local people were recruited, trained and gained the experience of delivering ParkLives sessions over the last six years.



Case Study: Alice and Kobby – ParkLives session leaders in Southampton

What encouraged you to become a ParkLives session leader?

Kobby: I've always been a big advocate for community schemes and programmes and ParkLives fit the bill. I love the idea of getting people from all walks of life and backgrounds together, socialising and getting active.

Alice: The opportunity to work outdoors as opposed to stuck at a desk and with a wide variety of people in the community.

What was the biggest challenge you had to overcome in the role?

Kobby: The biggest challenge I found was trying to gain trust with new participants. Some may have felt embarrassed to get involved if they were conscious about their weight for instance but this was quickly resolved once they saw like-minded people of a similar ability partaking in the activities. Bad weather (at times) also proved an obstacle trying to persuade participants to join in!

Alice: My confidence has always been lacking but throughout my time as an activator I feel this has grown. I now feel much more comfortable walking into a new environment and delivering to larger groups of people.

What has given you the greatest satisfaction in your role?

Kobby: Seeing the positive impact that the programme had on a wide range of people was very satisfying. Whether this be combating loneliness, or stories of participants losing weight and feeling better for it.

Alice: Providing opportunities to those that don't usually receive them has been the greatest satisfaction. There have been participants that are so grateful for the service we provide and for finding someone to listen to them - it has been incredible to be so appreciated in the community.

What skills have you improved based on your work on ParkLives?

Kobby: I feel I have improved my skill set as part of the role. Engaging within the community, working as part of a team, problem solving etc, all of which will help me on my quest for senior roles within the sports development field.

Alice: Parents and children alike have opened up to me about their lives which I think from learning about their experiences and the challenges they have faced, has made me much more empathetic and open about my own.

What is your key piece of advice to others delivering community programmes?

Kobby: Embrace it, be constantly proactive in your role and be prepared to adapt a session based on feedback you receive from participants. Above all, have fun!

Alice: Be prepared to adapt...and learn to like the rain!

National benefits:

Helping policy change

In July 2016, the Communities and Local Government Select Committee conducted an inquiry to examine the future of public parks, with a specific focus on why parks matter, what challenges the parks sector faces, and how a sustainable future can be secured for parks.

The ParkLives project lead at ukactive was called as an expert witness to give evidence to the Select Committee: The Future of Public Parks by Andrew Percy MP, former Minister for Parks and Green Spaces (2016-17).

The role that parks play in connecting communities was highlighted: supporting physical and mental wellbeing, building trust, confidence and overcoming issues like isolation as well as bringing positive economic impacts to the local area.

The Committee published a report in September 2017, 'The Future of Public Parks' which outlined 17 recommendations for local authorities to work closer with communities to identify the most appropriate groups to deliver provision of free services and activities in parks.



Top tips for building a successful community partnership programme

1

Set out a clear vision for success

Something all partners can buy into – ParkLives was to open up green community spaces to the least active in society and to do it in a fun, inclusive way, promoting sociability

2

Be open to all comers who share this vision

Build relationships early on with key local stakeholders and have a readily identifiable champion/lead for the programme who sets the tone, inspires and delivers the clear vision

3

Build your tribe

As you're developing your programme, don't underestimate the importance of meeting people face-to-face, as well as building communication through channels like Facebook groups and WhatsApp

4

Focus on each partner's respective strengths

The public/private partnerships allowed Coca-Cola Great Britain to provide broader support and communications expertise to supplement partners' local knowledge and insights

5

Plan from the ground up

Local delivery partners set themselves realistic annual KPIs for year-on-year growth. Overall expectations and parameters were communicated by Coca-Cola Great Britain (e.g. all activities must be free, 'non-sporty' activities to be encouraged as well as more traditional sports, session leader behaviour expectations)

6

Seek out local relationships from all corners

At a local level, ParkLives catalysed relationships with a range of partners, including the police, local retail, hospices and mental health groups. StreetGames network operators found on average they made 15 new partnerships locally through involvement with the programme

Top tips for building a successful community partnership programme

7

A small reward can go a long way

Monthly e-newsletters were developed to share with session leaders, with rewards for session leader of the month. Prizes like vouchers, gig and cinema tickets worked well to motivate session leaders

8

Engage and foster local innovation

We challenged and inspired delivery partners to be creative and innovative in their planning – take risks and experiment with what might work to engage local audiences - and rewarded them by providing additional PR support to drive awareness of innovation. A spirit of creative competition between delivery partners can be fostered!

9

Don't underestimate the power of social networks

Whether it's online or offline, inspiration comes from trusted sources within social groups. Word of mouth is the number one most powerful tool, but social media is a must

10

Build it and they won't necessarily come

Just because you provide opportunities, doesn't mean people will necessarily engage. We took ParkLives to audiences in high footfall locations (like shopping centres) through experiential events to show them what was available in their local parks

11

Don't chase numbers

While aiming for targets in terms of participation was useful to help build scale, it is the quality of the interactions that is vital. Create strong engagement and build communities and the right people will come. And return

12

Encourage long-term sustainability thinking

We challenged delivery partners to identify ways the programme could be sustainable throughout, including building capacity with volunteer-led models and local partnerships, e.g. with Friends of Park Groups and local funding partners. Engage key local stakeholders such as MPs, councillors and public health and GP teams

13

Use data and insights to learn and improve

Insights gathered from our data along with qualitative research and testimonials on the impact of the programme shifted the narrative of ParkLives away from physical activity and into wider wellbeing and community benefits



What's next?

2020 is the final year of Coca-Cola Great Britain's support of ParkLives as the programme transitions to sustained delivery within each participating local authority and through the existing Doorstep Sports Club model with StreetGames.

The investment Coca-Cola Great Britain has made into the programme has upskilled more than 250 local leaders who can use those skills to continue to connect with people within their communities and help them to live happier and healthier lifestyles. A number of partners will use volunteers to deliver the programmes to keep these free of charge to participants; others have been able to put a clear business case together to local funders from the public and private sector to show

the return on investment in local health and wellbeing outcomes to generate further funding; others are looking at affordable paid models of the programme to cover costs.

The benefits to local communities described in this report have been clearly evidenced and prove why ParkLives has a role to play in bringing communities together in green spaces for years to come.





To find out more please contact

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