



The  
Richmond  
Group  
of Charities

July 2024

## Executive Summary

# Millions more moving

**Our nation's mental and physical health is in a precarious state, yet one effective and inexpensive solution is too often ignored: helping people with long-term conditions to move more.**

Comprising up to 20 million people in England<sup>1</sup>, adults with long-term conditions are one of the most inactive groups. They are twice as likely to be inactive as the general population, and the likelihood of inactivity increases with the number of conditions someone has.<sup>2</sup>

The health and economic benefits of movement for people with long-term conditions are too important to be ignored:

- It can help manage more than 20 common health conditions.<sup>3</sup>
- It can help people to preserve function, maintain mobility, manage symptoms and reduce the risk of falls.<sup>4</sup>
- Every £1 spent on increasing physical activity generates £4 of savings across health, communities and the economy.<sup>5</sup>
- Movement can support people with long-term conditions to manage their condition and feel better equipped to stay in work.
- Supporting people to move as part of a range of interventions before surgery can reduce complications and the chances of readmission.<sup>6</sup>

Supporting people with long-term conditions to move more could help reduce inequalities. Long-term conditions are more common (and more likely to be severe) in older people and in people from lower socioeconomic groups, who are also more

likely to live with multiple conditions, including a mental health condition.<sup>7</sup> Our analysis has shown that inactivity among people with long-term conditions is amplified by age, gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic group.

Movement for people with long-term conditions can and should be made a possible part of everyday life for those of us able to be active. Moving more – be that hanging out washing, dancing in the kitchen, a walk, chair exercises at home or something more organised like walking tennis or an exercise class – is something that the majority of people with long-term conditions say they want to do.<sup>8</sup>

National government, sport governing bodies, NHS England, professional bodies in health and in sport, local authorities, local healthcare systems and the voluntary sector, including the Richmond Group of Charities, all have a role in improving the support system surrounding people with long-term conditions so they can move more and the inactivity inequity gap can be reduced.

The time to act is now. We are calling for three shifts national policymakers can set in motion to tackle inactivity, support people with long-term conditions and get millions moving.

People with long term conditions:

**96%** say being active is important

**72%** say NHS is most trusted source of advice

Up to **20 million people** with long-term conditions

## Shift One: Ensuring leadership and accountability

- The Department of Health and Social Care should have a minister with 'movement for health' explicit in their portfolio, with a mandate to work across all government departments to ensure the role of movement is leveraged at every opportunity.
- The government should develop a new cross-departmental movement strategy, informed by lived experience, to drive action to tackle inactivity and embed movement across government policy, especially in health and in sport and physical activity.
- NHS England should ensure responsibility for movement is explicitly included in the portfolios of its senior leaders both at national and local level.

## Shift Two: Embedding movement in healthcare

- NHS England should develop a plan to prioritise movement and reduce inactivity amongst people with long-term conditions.
- NHS England should work with professional associations and workforce leaders to ensure that the healthcare workforce is equipped with the skills and confidence to support people with long-term conditions to move more.
- NHS England should provide local systems with the support and resources to help people with long-term conditions move more.

## Shift Three: Encouraging movement as part of everyday life

- The Department for Culture, Media and Sport should galvanise sport sector leaders in supporting people with long-term conditions to move more, by prioritising inclusion and recognising intersectionality and the need for personalised approaches.
- We Are Undeatable should be at the heart of efforts to tackle inactivity and support people with long-term conditions, adopted by leading organisations in health and movement, as a source of inspiration and meaningful support.
- The Department of Health and Social Care should drive a 'health in all policies' approach nationally that includes movement as a fundamental pillar.

## References

<sup>1</sup> NHS Digital, Health Survey for England 2018: Longstanding conditions, 2018

<sup>2</sup> Sport England, Active Lives, 2022-23

<sup>3</sup> Academy of Medical Sciences, Exercise: The miracle cure and the role of the doctor in promoting it, 2015

<sup>4</sup> Versus Arthritis, The State of Musculoskeletal Health 2024, 2024

<sup>5</sup> Sheffield Hallam University, Measuring the Social and Economic Impact of Sport in England Summary: Social and economic value of community sport and physical activity in England, 2020

<sup>6</sup> The Centre for Perioperative Care, Perioperative Care: The key to reducing waiting lists, 2023

<sup>7</sup> King's Fund, Long Term Conditions

<sup>8</sup> We Are Undeatable, Insight on Inequalities, 2023

<sup>9</sup> We Are Undeatable, Bridging the gap: understanding how to support people with long term health conditions to become more physically active, 2024

<sup>10</sup> We Are Undeatable, Bridging the gap: understanding how to support people with long term health conditions to become more physically active, 2024

<sup>11</sup> NHS Digital, Health Survey for England 2018: Longstanding conditions, 2018

<sup>12</sup> We Are Undeatable, Insight on Inequalities, 2023. Available on request.

