

Public and Stakeholder Engagement Report for Gedling BC

August 2025



**Active
Insight**



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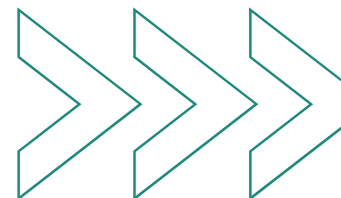
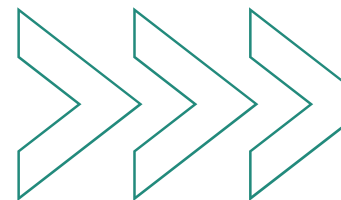


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1 Project Background



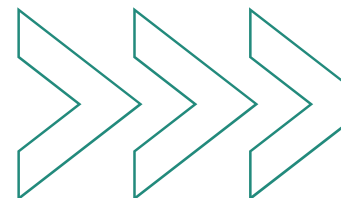
Active Insight, the industry leader for Customer Insight and Market Intelligence in the active leisure industry, is delighted to present this report. This report summarises the key findings of the Public and Stakeholder engagement groups undertaken on behalf of Gedling Borough Council and Alliance Leisure.

Gedling Borough Council is planning a major redevelopment of its leisure facilities to create a new Carlton Leisure, Wellbeing & Community Centre on the Richard Herrod site. This initiative aims to address the challenges posed by ageing infrastructure, high maintenance costs and limited accessibility. The proposed facility will integrate leisure, health and community services under one roof, offering spaces for fitness, wellbeing, social activities and potential health services. The Council seeks community feedback to ensure the new centre meets the needs of residents and promotes inclusivity, sustainability and environmental goals.

Two public engagement sessions took place, one with staff from the centres, and a total of 16 other sessions were held with various stakeholders/partners. The sessions were conducted by Active Insight Director Julie Allen, the team at Alliance Leisure or members of the client's own team, during July 2025.

In addition, 11 letters were received expressing groups or individuals' views, and one school survey was submitted as being relevant to the consultation. A list of all groups who were consulted is detailed below and the names of people/groups submitting letters are listed in the Appendix.

2 List of groups consulted



Public Engagement X 2

Sports Groups

- Muslim Sports Foundation
- Bowls Club Group

Young People/Education Groups

- Redhill Academy Trust
- Primary Schols (5–11-year-olds)
- Public Youth Clubs and Active Notts
- Youth Council
- Hollinsclough and Cavendish Academies

Older People Groups

- Senior Council (Older Adults)
- U3A
- Older adults – New Community Health and Wellbeing Club

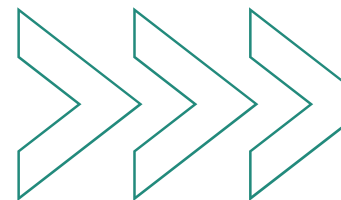
Health and Wellbeing groups

- Active Notts and Gedling Leisure Transformation
- Arnold Primary Care Network
- Calton PCN and NNE Directors
- Gedling Health and Wellbeing Co-production
- Carlton Community Health and Wellbeing Hub – INT and PBP Development

Other Professional Groups

- Community Hubs and Partners Network
- NCC Planning – Spatial Planning Framework
- Gedling BC Workforce

3 Key Findings – Public Engagement - Group 1



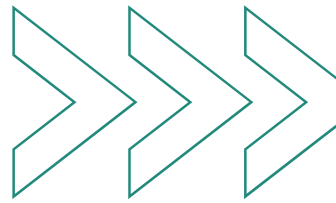
Facilitated by Julie Allen – 6 attendees

Summary:

This group stressed the critical role that physical activity plays in overall wellbeing, transcending age and health status. Attendees ranged from active seniors to those with long-term health conditions, all emphasizing the importance of staying active for mental and emotional health.

Social connection was repeatedly highlighted as a vital component, with group activities such as team sports, U3A classes and family outings providing purpose and camaraderie. Many attendees were motivated but faced barriers like limited programming options (especially early mornings and specific activities like walking football), transport difficulties and uneven pavements increasing fall risks.

Cultural barriers, particularly for women requiring women-only sessions, were noted. The group advocated for diverse, inclusive and adaptable facilities—including multi-purpose indoor sports halls, dementia-friendly atmospheres and social spaces like cafes—plus amenities like better changing facilities, showers and more engaging activity options for older adults and those living alone. They also expressed interest in health services like MOTs and physiotherapy to promote proactive wellbeing.

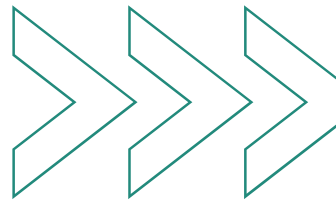


Key Findings – Public Engagement - Group 1 (continued)

Key points/Recommendations:

- Develop flexible, multi-use indoor sports facilities suitable for various age groups and conditions.
- Incorporate dementia-friendly design features and safe outdoor walkable spaces.
- Schedule diverse programming times, including early mornings, to accommodate different needs.
- Introduce culturally sensitive options such as women-only sessions.
- Enhance changing and shower facilities to meet increased demand.
- Create social spaces like cafes and community rooms to foster social interactions.
- Integrate health promotion services like MOTs and physiotherapy to support proactive health care.

Key Findings – Public Engagement – Group 2



Facilitated by Julie Allen – 6 attendees

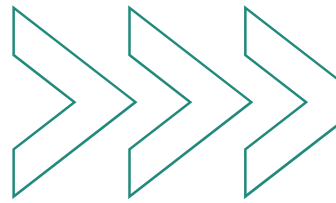
Summary:

Participants in this session displayed a strong desire to become more active, emphasising physical and social wellbeing, especially for those recovering from health challenges such as lung cancer and stroke. The group included long-time fitness enthusiasts, recovering individuals seeking confidence and seniors actively engaging with community activities.

Barriers included issues with changing amenities, concerns about costs, physical discomforts like cold pools and environmental factors such as lighting and space within gyms. The members sought inviting, light-filled spaces, better facilities (e.g., gyms with windows, more equipment) and a relaxed environment for socializing over coffee. They proposed expanding health partnerships with NHS physiotherapists, blood donation clinics and rehab services, recognizing the link between community fitness and health management.

The importance of inclusive, accessible design and programs was underlined, with specific calls for dedicated family areas, improved changing rooms and support for mental wellbeing.

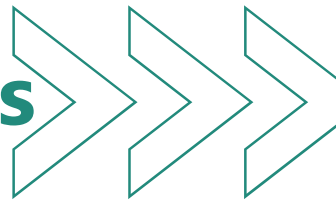
Key Findings – Public Engagement – Group 2 (continued)



Key Points/Recommendations:

- Upgrade changing areas, improve climate control (e.g., pool temperature) and enhance gym environments with natural light.
- Incorporate dedicated social zones like cafes with comfortable seating, fostering community and conversation.
- Develop health partnerships with NHS, offering physiotherapy, rehab and health screening services.
- Increase gym and exercise class options, including specialist classes for recovery and gentle exercise.
- Consider implementing affordable pricing tiers to improve access.
- Maintain existing amenities such as squash courts, ensuring they remain a part of the facility.

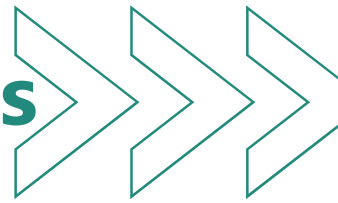
4 Key Findings – Sports Groups



Summary:

- Mental health is widely regarded as a taboo topic within British Muslim communities, despite recognition of its importance and the positive impact of physical activity on wellbeing.
- There is low awareness and usage of formal mental health services, with a preference for faith-based coping strategies like prayer and support from family and friends.
- Mosques and local community hubs are underutilized for mental health support, though there is community backing for Islamic perspectives encouraging help-seeking.
- Sport and physical activity are seen as valuable tools for mental wellness, with potential for culturally sensitive, faith-linked programs such as group movements and mindfulness activities.
- Women, young people and less active individuals require targeted, gender-sensitive and youth-specific programming, including women-only spaces, modest attire options and prayer-friendly facilities.
- Recommendations for facilities include creating private consultation spaces, training staff in cultural competence, delivering culturally resonant activities, partnering with community leaders and establishing ongoing community advisory panels.

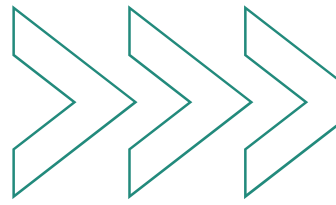
4 Key Findings – Sports Groups



Bowls Focus Group Summary:

- The bowls club community expresses strong concern that their facility and membership are being overlooked, with feelings that decisions about closure have been predetermined without adequate community input.
- The club emphasizes that the current bowls facility is well-maintained and in use; they advocate for refurbishing or expanding the existing site rather than relocating, to preserve social, health and inclusion benefits for older residents.
- Many participants stress the critical role of bowls in supporting mental health, social connection and routine for seniors and disabled individuals, warning that closure would significantly harm these vulnerable groups.
- Concerns are raised over transportation and accessibility issues, including poor public transport options and parking limitations at the proposed site, which could hinder ongoing participation.
- The community highlights the need for sufficient facilities—specifically six lanes or more—to sustain the club’s activities, competitions and growth, citing examples from other councils like Rushcliffe, where limited lanes led to club closure.
- Participants demand transparency regarding impact assessments, re-homing plans and project timelines and strongly oppose perceived discrimination against the elderly by closing the club, emphasizing that bowls is vital for their health, social inclusion and wellbeing.

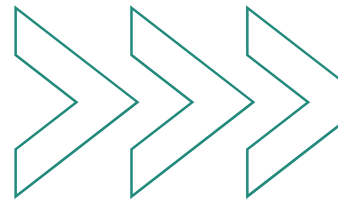
5 Key Findings – Young People/Education



Summary:

- Community engagement highlights the importance of community-led initiatives and building social infrastructure alongside physical activities to foster relationships and inclusivity in the new leisure centre.
- Youth-specific features should include dedicated spaces for mental health support, flexible activity zones for structured and informal use, youth advisory committees for influence and sustainable, affordable programming through partnerships.
- The centre should cater to diverse interests by offering traditional sports, creative spaces and multi-generational areas, leveraging existing community assets to ensure sustainable operations and community integration.
- Stakeholder discussions with Redhill Academy Trust confirm strategic alignment on the redevelopment, with plans to expand educational facilities, repurpose underused estate areas like squash courts and maintain community access to sports facilities amid site transitions.
- The Trust emphasizes collaboration with GBC and NCC to ensure smooth transitions, with potential opportunities for shared use of existing 3G pitches and maintaining community sports access outside school hours, supporting both educational growth and local wellbeing.
- Primary school children's preferences strongly favour water-based facilities such as standard pools, inflatables and slides, highlighting their importance for fun, socialization and physical activity; dry-side activities like padel tennis and soft play are also valued for family inclusion and peer interaction, emphasizing a balanced, engaging mix to attract young users.

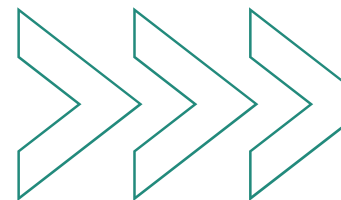
6 Key Findings – Older People



Summary:

- Transport and accessibility are major concerns, with a need for improved public transport links, parking and daytime scheduling to support older adults' participation.
- There is concern that a new flagship centre might threaten existing smaller community venues; a strategy to support and integrate these smaller centres is essential.
- Transparency around funding and financial sustainability of the redevelopment project is important to gain community trust and support.
- The facility should feature flexible, accessible spaces with high-quality AV infrastructure suitable for large groups and community activities.
- Programming should include low-impact, social activities like pickleball, pétanque, walking and dance, catering to older adults' physical and social needs.
- Continuity during redevelopment is crucial, with suggestions for phased construction or concurrent operation of existing and new centres to avoid disrupting services.

7 Key Findings – Health and Wellbeing Groups



Summary:

The new Carlton Centre should function as a holistic health and wellbeing hub, integrating leisure, community, social and health services to support prevention, social connection and early intervention.

- It must prioritize inclusive design and accessible infrastructure, including neurodiversity, dementia-friendly features and targeted outreach to underrepresented groups such as disabled residents, ethnic communities and youth.
- Strong emphasis on co-locating services like mental health support, social prescribing, welfare advice and health screenings, with dedicated private spaces and referral pathways.
- Location and transport access are critical; collaborations with regional transport providers, cycle infrastructure and community shuttles should be developed to ensure equitable access for all residents.
- The centre should serve as a community connector, with flexible multi-use spaces, digital information screens and resident-led engagement that reflects Carlton's local identity and encourages social interaction.
- Partnership working and alignment with existing local infrastructure and partners are essential to prevent service duplication, support small venues and maximize community impact.

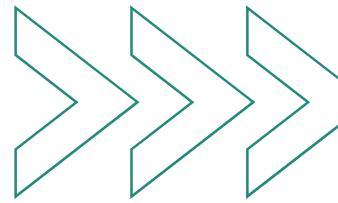
8 Key Findings – Other Professional Groups



Summary:

- The Gedling Borough Community Hubs should be designed as inclusive, multi-functional spaces that prioritize neurodiversity, dementia-friendly features and accommodate vulnerable populations through sensory-friendly environments and clear signage.
- There is a significant need for large-scale, flexible community venues, supporting cross-sector events, civic participation and reducing service duplication by integrating existing local hubs.
- Co-located services such as welfare advice, social prescribing, mental health support and health screenings should be embedded within hubs to address social determinants of health and foster early intervention.
- Improving access through active travel infrastructure, public transport collaborations, cycle storage and community transport options is crucial to ensure equitable reach, especially for disadvantaged and mobility-restricted residents.
- The facilities should serve as strong community connectors, with flexible and digital spaces for local groups, residents and neighbourhood engagement, reflecting local identity and fostering social cohesion.
- Embedding health impact considerations into planning via the NCC Spatial Planning & Health Framework—including the use of RHIA, sustainable design principles and ongoing assessment—will enhance the health and sustainability of the developments.

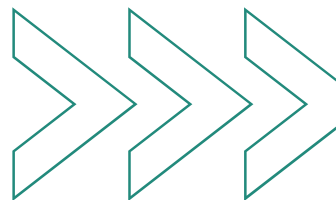
9 Key Findings – Gedling Leisure Workforce



Facilitated by Tom Fletcher - Leisure & Wellbeing Transformation Programme Manager

Attendees: 20 Leisure centre staff from Carlton Forum, Redhill, Calverton, Arnold and Richard Herrod, representing the following roles:

- Duty Managers
- Fitness Instructors
- Swimming Teachers
- Lifeguards
- Receptionists
- Swim School Coordinators
- Group Exercise Coordinators
- Leisure Centre Assistants
- Operations Managers



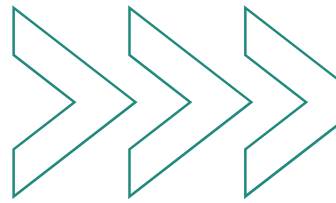
Key Findings – Gedling Workforce (Continued)

Summary:

Staff highlighted the vital role existing centres, especially Calverton Leisure Centre, play in serving vulnerable populations: older adults, disabled people and families needing accessible, community-focused environments. They stressed the importance of inclusivity and the need for facilities that support rehabilitation, low-impact activity and social engagement.

Pool design was identified as a priority, with features like movable floors to enhance versatility for lessons, disability access and rehabilitative sessions. The team pointed out operational challenges such as poor transport links, inadequate staff and customer parking, safety concerns related to anti-social behaviour and the need for training and development spaces.

Customer experience was a key focus: welcoming reception areas, private spaces for sensitive services and outdoor activity zones to encourage healthy lifestyles. Revenue-generating ideas included community events, birthday parties and sport courts, which could attract different age groups and income streams. Staff emphasized designing a future-proof, flexible and inclusive centre that meets operational, community and health needs.

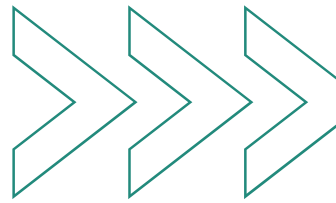


Key Findings – Gedling Workforce (Continued)

Key Points/Recommendations:

- Incorporate flexible pool features such as movable floors and accessible swimming lessons.
- Design the site for excellent customer flow and experience, including welcoming reception and private service areas.
- Develop a comprehensive transport plan, including improved links and active travel infrastructure.
- Build in operational facilities such as staff parking, training rooms and safety measures for security.
- Expand community engagement with flexible outdoor spaces, activity zones and revenue opportunities like parties and teen-focused facilities.
- Address physical accessibility throughout the site, including improved access for disabled users and families.
- Continue offering inclusive programs for vulnerable groups and those with specific health needs.

Appendix - Letters submitted



Letters submitted:

- Dale Hudson
- Gedling Indoor Bowling Club
- Notts Ladies Association – Jayne Croxall
- Nottingham County Federation
- Nottinghamshire County Ladies Association
- Maggie Smith MBE
- Retford Bowling Club
- Richard Herrod Sports Centre
- Ruth Boden
- Susan Gee

Acknowledgements

With special thanks to:

- The public and stakeholder groups for their engagement and contribution to this piece of research.

Contact Us



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