ukactive Manifesto for an Active Britain

The General Election on June 8th is arguably the most important for a generation and will have huge implications for the future of the UK. As well as the opportunity to decide our political future, ukactive believes this vote offers the chance to decide on the type of society that we and our children want to live in. If we want this to be a healthy, successful, productive and vibrant society, then physical activity must form a central pillar.

Every day, husbands, wives, parents and grandparents are dying needlessly because they live in a society that doesn't value physical activity highly enough. Physical inactivity costs the UK economy an estimated £20bn per year and causes 37,000 deaths per annum. With an ageing population and an NHS at breaking point, we must build movement back into our daily lives to reap the physical mental and social benefits before it is too late. Be it at school, work, home or at play, we must make physical activity the natural choice from cradle to grave.

We urge all parties in this election to pledge to put the health of the country at the heart of their campaigns, and to commit to policies in their manifestos that encourage, support, and promote an Active Britain.

Schools

· Government should roll out fitness measurement programmes in schools that are fun and enjoyable for kids, easy to implement and welcomed by parents. As with English and Maths tests, schools will then able to make direct interventions to safeguard children who are at risk of ill health due to their fitness levels.

· Active mile concepts should be rolled out across all schools in the UK. Inactive childhoods cause immediate damage to physical development, attention span and academic performance – why not take simple and easy steps to counter this?

· Funding from the Sugar Tax should be used to open up schools over holiday periods for holistic Summer camps offering all children – particularly the most deprived – access to free activity sessions and healthy meals. ukactive research shows that children are losing around 80 per cent of the fitness they build up during the school year due to inactive summer holidays, with poor nutrition and excess screen time having a huge impact on the health of our children.

Workplaces

· It is time to tackle the tackle the toxic toll of sedentary office culture wreaking havoc on our workers' health and performance. Sitting at a desk for eight hours a day increases the risk of premature death by up to 60 per cent. Many workers struggle to fit exercise into their busy working days, leading to higher rates of absenteeism (which costs the UK £29bn a year) and reduced productivity across the workforce.

· Government should expand the successful 'Cycle to Work' scheme to include gym passes and equipment to offer workers more ways to get active under a policy called 'Workout from Work'.

· ukactive has worked with accountancy specialist Saffery Champness to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the economic outcomes of enacting 'Workout from Work'. The analysis found that for every £1 spent on the scheme, the government would save over £2.60 in NHS treatment costs and productivity increases, helping to tackle the sedentary office cultures fuelling the UK's physical inactivity crisis.

Industrial Strategy

· The Government's Industrial Strategy must recognise that our public health infrastructure is just as important as our train or plane networks. This should be driven by a £1bn regeneration scheme to transform the UK's ageing fleet of leisure centres into new community wellness hubs that can serve as the preventative frontline of the NHS.

· These wellness hubs combine swimming pools, gyms and sports halls, with GP drop-in centres, libraries and police services, to create a one-stop-shop for public services.
With government borrowing costs at an all-time low, now is the perfect opportunity to invest in our future. Transforming our infrastructure to inspire movement can catalyse the cultural shift needed to inspire a more active Britain.

· Putting physical activity - described by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges as a miracle cure - at the heart of community infrastructure is the only long-term solution to save the NHS from bankruptcy and empower society to lead more active lifestyles.

Healthy High Streets

· Britain's unhealthy high streets are a reflection of our warped lifestyle priorities. Archaic planning laws currently make it easier to open takeaways and betting shops than businesses that make a positive contribution – economically, socially and physically – to the community.

· Government should enact more flexible planning regulations and business rates to maximise the transformational health impact that businesses such as gyms can have on communities. Every town in Britain deserves a healthy high street, with physical activity businesses as its beating heart.

Active Ageing

· Sedentary lifestyles are sending our ageing crisis into overdrive and this will bankrupt our health system unless we shift focus from prevention onto cure. ukactive analysis has found that getting Britons aged over 60 to do five 30-minute dance classes a week could help save the NHS £11bn, preventing almost 850,000 cases of disease and injury and saving billions more in social care costs.

· Government should commit to the mandatory formation of physical activity strategies in care and residential homes to unlock the huge health benefits of activities like Zumba and dance, reinvigorating residents and giving them greater independence for longer.

Blueprint for an Active Britain

Published in November 2016, ukactive's Blueprint for an Active Britain: Milestone Review outlined a series of clear and achievable policy calls on how to harness the power of physical activity to get more people, more active, more often.

To read more recommendations on how to create a more active society for all, click here: http://www.ukactive.com/policy-insight/blueprint-milestone-review