



CLAHRCBITE

December 2019

Exploring motivations and barriers to being physically active in relation to where people live in Wirral

Exploring the influence of where people live on physical activity behaviour



The aim of this research was to explore the influence of where people live on physical activity. Previous research has focused largely on built environment features via quantitative enquiry.

This study used mixed methods to provide qualitative context to quantitative data and better understand motivations and barriers to being physically active in relation to where people live.

Wirral, Merseyside was the study location; a borough rich in socioeconomic and geographic diversity between east and west. East Wirral is broadly characterised by greater residential density, greater deprivation and primarily urban features. West Wirral is more rural, with greater affluence and lower housing density.

What was the aim of the project?

The study aimed to explore whether residence of east or west Wirral influenced self-reported and/or objectively measured physical activity based on deprivation differences between east and west.

How did we involve people?

Guidance was enlisted from a local fitness and nutrition consultant during protocol development. Their input was invaluable regarding understanding behavioural motivation toward physical activity and ways in which individuals engage with activity monitoring equipment. Members of the public were consulted informally regarding the proposed research focus.



What did we do?

40 residents were recruited from across Wirral to represent each deprivation quintile. Participants completed self-report questionnaires on demographics, general health, personal wellbeing, physical activity and perception of neighbourhood environment. They then wore a Fitbit Charge HR physical activity monitor for seven days during waking hours. Those consenting to semi-structured interview shared their experiences of being physically active in Wirral, including perceived facilitators and barriers to being active and engaging with Fitbit technology. Quantitative and qualitative data were synthesised to produce mixed methods results. Results were analysed against open source deprivation data to identify whether east-west Wirral deprivation differences influenced physical activity behaviour.

What we found and what does this mean?

Physical activity was found to be influenced by personal volition and daily routine. Participants describing habituated physical activity and inclination toward active occupations reported greater levels of physical activity and self-reported wellbeing than those who did not.

No difference was found in volition toward physical activity between residents of east and west Wirral. East Wirral residents reported greater wellbeing and accumulated on average more daily steps than those in west Wirral.

Perceived neighbourhood activity-friendliness was greater in west Wirral. Deprivation was negatively correlated with self-reported wellbeing, perception of neighbourhood environment and accumulated daily steps across Wirral.

Physical activity is influenced by interconnected personal, social and physical environment characteristics, each affecting roles and routine in line with what is meaningful and relevant to the individual. Intrinsic factors appear to influence physical activity more greatly than external influences.

A person-centred, active listening approach is required to understand activity behaviour on an individual and community-wide basis to identify tailored ways to encourage physical activity as part of daily routine.

What is NIHR ARC North West Coast?

The Applied Research Collaboration North West Coast (ARC NWC) superseded CLAHRC NWC in September 2019. It is a partnership between universities, NHS, councils and other stakeholders, and the public. Its mission is to undertake applied research to improve public health, wellbeing, quality of care & reduce health inequalities across the North West Coast region. ARC NWC is funded by the National Institute for Health Research.

Find out more: arcnwc@liverpool.ac.uk

<https://arc-nwc.nihr.ac.uk/>