

01 Situation Report Series

Physical Activity

SEPTEMBER 2026



The Situation Reports series provide an overview of the current situation of a topic of concern. The reports are purposely short and focused in order to provide timely updates allowing quicker response.

Outcomes could range from informing colleagues, taking action or triggering a deep dive into the topic.

The report is produced by Thurrock Public Health Intelligence Team, after reviewing available data.

Acknowledgements: This JSNA product has been developed with input from partner organisations represented through the JSNA Steering Group. The inclusion of partner logos recognises their contribution to the JSNA programme and does not necessarily indicate formal endorsement of the content of this document.

Look out for our upcoming reports on:



Immunisations in Thurrock



Excess weight in childhood



Tobacco in Thurrock



Oral Health in Thurrock



Respiratory Conditions in Thurrock

Background

Physical Activity plays a big role in the health of individuals, communities and society. Regular physical activity helps prevent many major diseases by keeping the heart, brain, bones, and metabolism healthy. It lowers the risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, obesity, certain cancers, osteoporosis, depression, anxiety, dementia, and poor sleep, while also strengthening the immune system and improving overall quality of life.

Physical Activity is a crucial factor in Children's Health, especially in preventing and managing Obesity. It optimizes bone density and motor skill development. Inactivity has been identified as a significant contributor to childhood obesity. In Thurrock over 20% of Reception age children are overweight or Obese (2023/24) and in Year 6 this figure is over 37%.

Data Sources

The data used in this report is primarily from Physical Activity Data by Sport England (SE), as interpreted by the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) and published via the fingertips platform¹. Each year, two surveys are conducted - 'Active People' and 'Active Lives Children and Young People'. These surveys are used to measure national activity levels. The Active lives small area estimate project was commissioned to estimate the proportion of adults and children and young people in 'small areas' across England who are physically active, physically inactive/less active or (in the case of adults only) participate in sport.

The data is based on modelled estimates that have been created using a multilevel regression and poststratification (MRP) analysis. Whilst standard design-based survey methodologies have historically struggled with small-area estimation, MRP is able to accurately reconstruct small areas. MRP is widely seen as the leading method for model-based small area estimation in health surveys, particularly when studying health inequalities. Although MRP methods are found to be reliable, it is still a prediction based on multi-level regression and may be biased if the baseline population data is not current.



Sport England have prioritised areas based on their 'Place Need Classification Tool' which can be found here.



The report also makes use of the IMD 2025 deprivation scores and deciles.

¹ Methodology differences exist between the original analysis by sport England and OHID. In general OHID have interpreted the data more favourably. For the purposes of this report it is the interpretation of trends and benchmarking which is of interest and as such using a consistent methodology is considered more important than which methodology is correct.

Headlines

- 57% of adults (19+) are physically active (2023/24). This is significantly lower than our statistical neighbours.
- There is no evidence that these levels have improved over the last 9 years in Thurrock or in England as a whole.
- Based on inactivity data alone, Thurrock areas with the highest levels of inactivity in adults are within South Ockendon, Chadwell St Mary and Stanford East (LSOA's), in these areas there are an additional 10% more people inactive compared to the lowest areas.
- Priority areas for increasing participation in physical activity in Thurrock based on the Sport England Place Needs Classification, which also includes social need, include Chadwell St Mary, South Ockendon and Tilbury.
- Nationally there are higher levels of adult inactivity in areas with higher levels of deprivation. This pattern is also observed in Thurrock.
- Adults who are at higher risk of being inactive include those who are older, long term unemployed, certain ethnic groups and those who are disabled.
- Women, particularly those who are pregnant or post-natal are identified as being more inactive than men.
- In 2023/24, 34.5% of children (aged 5-16 years) were physically active. This figure is statistically significantly lower than the England figure of 47.8%, is the lowest when compared to our statistical neighbours (those with data) and is more than ten percent lower than it was in 2022/23.
- Inactivity in children is a Thurrock wide issue, with small but statistically significant amounts of variation associated with deprivation and significant inequalities observable for those who have a disability or long-term limiting illness.
- Thurrock is a part of the Sport England Place Based Expansion Programme in Greater Essex. The Thurrock Place Partnership, known as Find Your Active Thurrock, has secured investment and is working as a collaborative partnership to reduce inactivity and increase physical activity across the Borough.

Public Health Response

Given the ongoing position against these metrics in Thurrock improving levels of physical activity in both adults and children will remain a high priority for the public health team and the health and care system. It is hoped that the place-based expansion work will begin to shift the dial as we work together as a Find Your Active Thurrock partnership and residents.

This year's annual report of the director of public health will be dedicated towards increasing the awareness of this work to help maximise the impact.

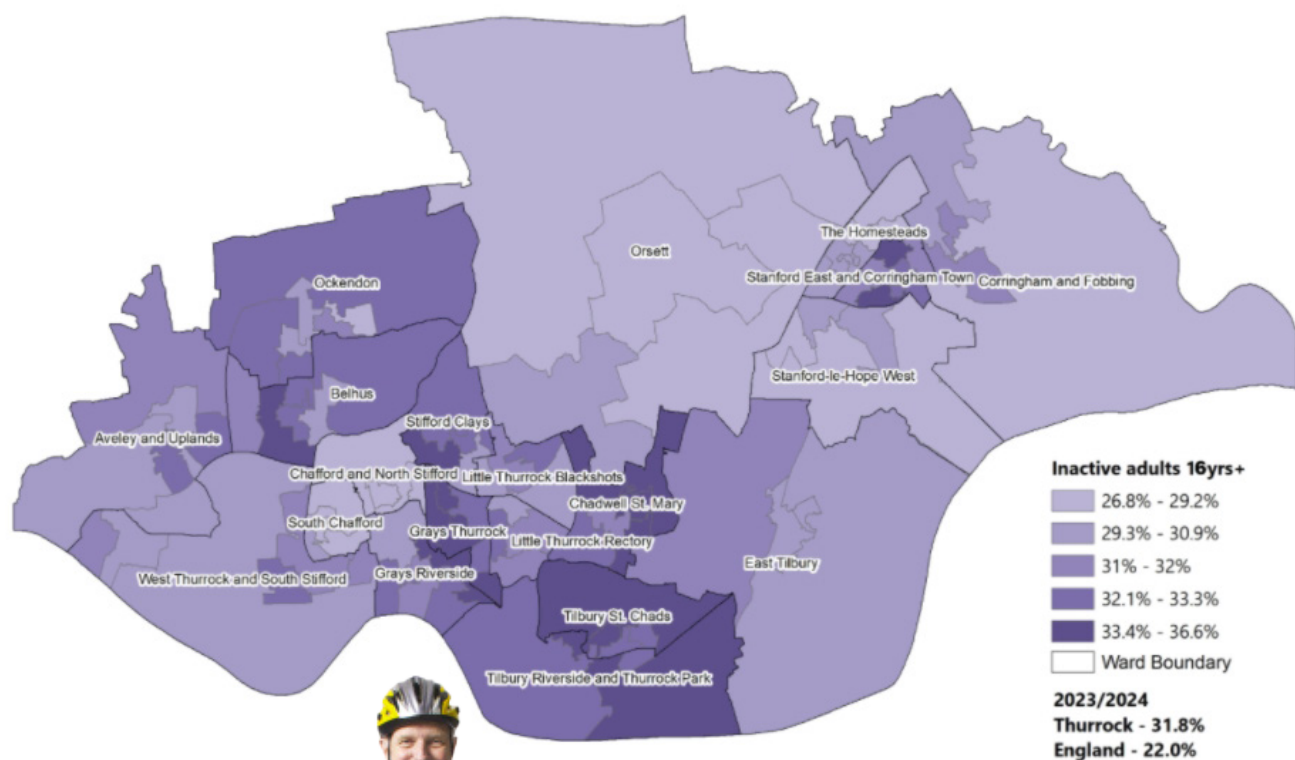


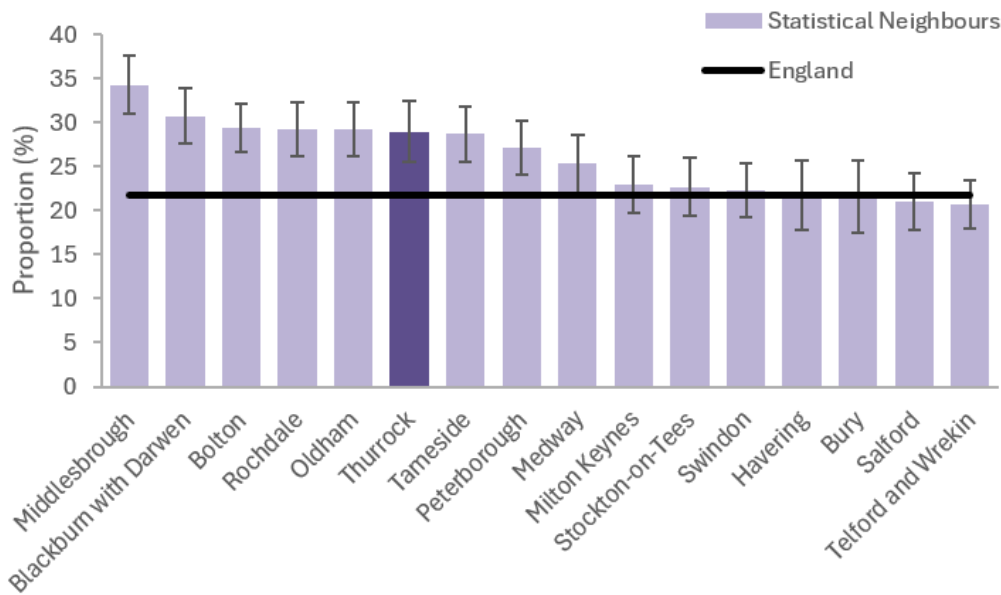
Physical (In)activity in Adults

Definition 1: The number of respondents aged 19 and over, with valid responses to questions on physical activity, doing at least 150 moderate intensity equivalent (MIE) minutes physical activity per week in bouts of 10 minutes or more in the previous 28 days expressed as a percentage of the total number of respondents aged 19 and over.

Definition 2: Physically Inactive Adults refers to anyone aged 16 and over who does 30 minutes or less activity per week.

Physical inactivity in Adults, 16yrs+, 2023/24 (Inactivity - less than 30 minutes activity per week) by Thurrock LSOAs (2021)





Physically Inactive Adults - Thurrock and statistical neighbours 2023/2024

In 2023/24 57% of adults aged 19+ are physically active. This is statistically significantly lower than the England average (67%) and has consistently been so for the past 9 years.

No improvement is observable over the period.

Within Thurrock there is a variation of just over 10% in levels of adult physical inactivity. (27.6% to 37.7%)

Compared to statistical neighbours and the England average, Thurrock has a statistically significant higher percentage of inactive adults (2023/24).

Inactivity in selected groups

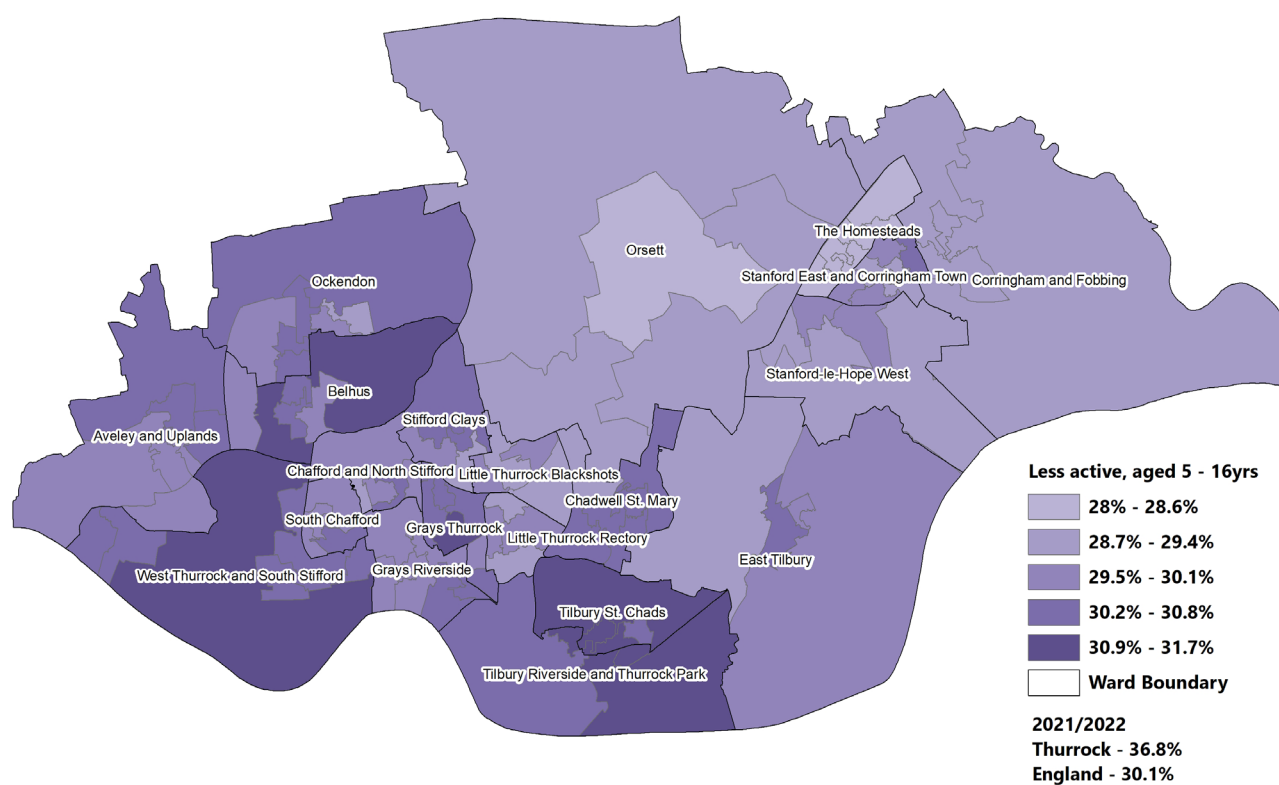
- More than half of 75+ year olds are physically inactive. In areas such as West Thurrock, Aveley, South Ockendon, Grays Chafford Gorges & Orsett Road, Tilbury and Chadwell St Mary more than 60% of 75+ year olds are inactive.
- 30-40% of 55- to 74-year-olds are inactive.
- Of those who are reported to be long term unemployed or who have never worked, the percentage who are inactive within Thurrock MSOA's is higher (52.4% average) than the England average of 47.4%. The average for Thurrock shows that over half of adults within this category are inactive.
- A higher proportion (approx. 50%) of disabled adults are inactive compared with those with no disability (approx. 30%).
- Nationally there are more women (23.2%) who are inactive than men (20.5%) and this difference is statistically significant.
- Nationally it is reported by Sport England that pregnant and post-natal women are one of the least active groups.
- Differences are also observable by ethnicity with Asian (32.1%) Black (29.9%) and Chinese (23.8%) groups having a statistically significantly higher percentage of inactivity than White British (20.1%) or White Other (20.8%)

Physical (In)activity in Children

Definition1: Physically active those who undertook an average of at least 60 minutes moderate to vigorous intensity activity per day across the week.

Definition 2: Physically less active – those doing less than an average of 30 minutes a day.

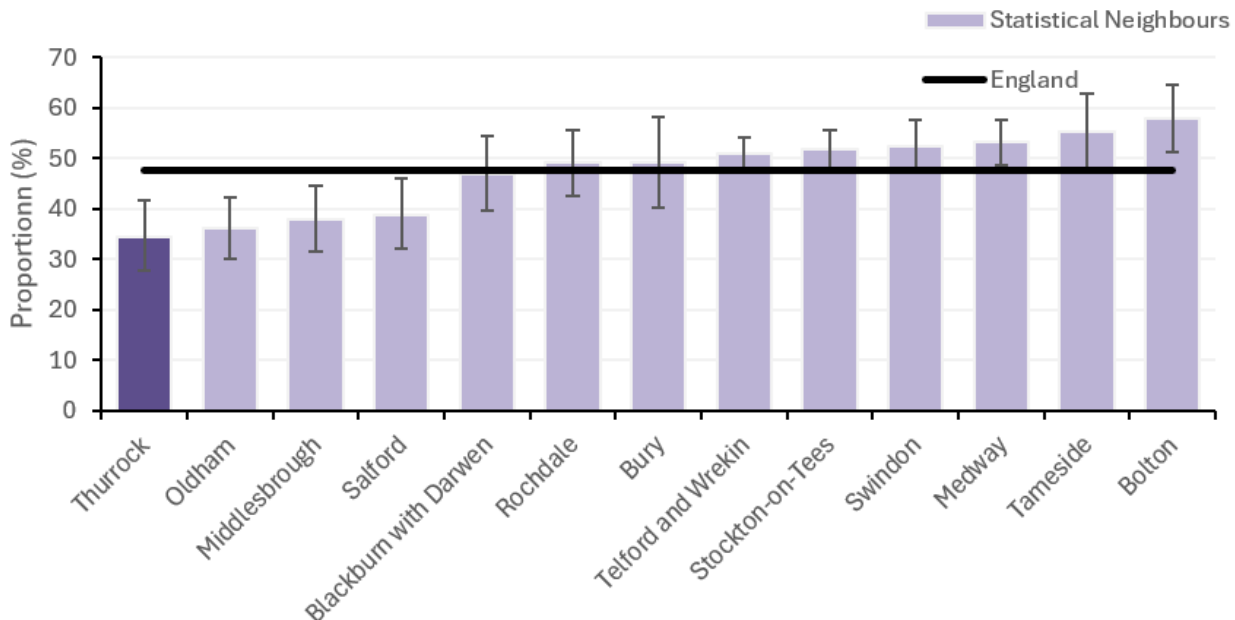
Physically less active children and young people, 5 - 16yrs, 2021/22
(Less than an average of 30 minutes a day) by Thurrock LSOAs (2021)



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Percentage of Physically active children and young people - Thurrock with Statistical neighbours 2023/24



In 2023/24 34.5% (aged 5-16 years) were physically active. This figure is statistically significantly lower than the England figure of 47.8%, is the lowest when compared to our statistical neighbours (those with data) and is more than ten percent lower than it was in 2022/23.²

The variation of children and young people that are physically less active in Thurrock LSOA's ranges from 28% to 32%, although statistically significant this variation is small suggesting that this is an issue that needs to be addressed across the whole of Thurrock with additional effort in areas of higher concentrations (proportionate universalism).

Inactivity in selected groups

- Among children across LSOAs in England, there is a statistically significant positive correlation with deprivation (as measured between IMD 2025 score and physical inactivity). Children who live in areas with highest levels of deprivation are 10.6 times more likely to be inactive compared to those in areas of lowest deprivation.
- Across LSOAs in England there is a significant moderately positive correlation between deprivation (as measured by IMD 2025 score) and physical inactivity in children.
- Differences in levels of physical inactivity can be observed across Thurrock between children with a disability or long-term limiting illness and those without. Although these differences are unlikely to be statistically significantly different due to small numbers it is a pattern seen across the area and England as a whole and is clinically important.

² There is a sudden decline of more than 10% between 2022/23 and 2023/24. This could be due to data collection differences, analytical differences but is most likely random variation.

What's happening in Thurrock?

Sport England Place Based Expansion Programme – “Find Your Active Thurrock”



- During 2023-25, Thurrock's Place Based Expansion Partnership, Find Your Active Thurrock, was formed and includes a range of key stakeholders – Active Essex, Thurrock Council, Thurrock CVS and Impulse Leisure. The partnership, with Active Essex as the lead applicant, was successful in securing £235,700 of investment from Sport England to set the foundations, undertake some test and learn and to apply for a full award.
- Find Your Active Thurrock submitted a successful full award proposal, “Connecting People to Place through Physical Activity” which is seeing Thurrock receive over £2 million between 2025 and 2028 - including £1 million from Sport England, plus match funding from local partners. The programme focuses on 5 key thematic areas, and under this, a range of projects to increase physical activity across the Borough.

These include:

- **Leadership and Workforce Development** – supporting necessary capacity in the community and supporting the development of a wide range of stakeholders.
 - **Activating Neighbourhoods and Spaces** – activating the places where people live and play by delivering on projects which engage communities with their local environments, including local streets and parks and open spaces.
 - **Active Travel** – taking a whole systems approach to travelling actively to school and using public spaces to learn about cycling.
 - **Community** – working in communities to increase physical activity through target places or groups of people.
 - **Creation of an Active Wellbeing Service** – supporting the development of ‘Active Wellbeing’ as a core part of managing health and wellbeing for long-term health conditions, falls prevention, and supported employment.
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- As well as working to support the whole of Thurrock to get active, the key target areas of Chadwell St. Mary, South Ockendon and Tilbury are also being supported with targeted activity.



Thurrock's health and wellbeing needs
Situation Report Series