

# Assurance Framework

## 2017



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## 1. Introduction

Active Black Country (ABC) is the Government and Sport England recognised Country Sports Partnership (CSP) for the Black Country region, providing the strategic leadership for sport and physical activity across the areas of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton. It operates under its clear vision of 'We aim to make it easier for individuals and communities to be physically active. To be safe, secure, healthy and passionate about sport'.

ABC is hosted by the Black Country Consortium (BCC Ltd) as its accountable body and employer. As a not for profit Company, limited by guarantee, BCC Ltd is a small, multi-disciplined team working to promote economic prosperity, health and well-being in the Black Country. In collaboration with the 4 Black Country local authorities Walsall, Sandwell, Dudley, the City of Wolverhampton and the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), it supports the delivery of the vision and objectives set out in the Black Country Strategic Economic Plan (SEP).

The geographical region comprising the Black Country covers 365 square kilometres, and is made up of 30 towns and four strategic centres with a growing population of 1.17m. Sitting at the heart of England, it forms the west part of the West Midlands Metropolitan Area and is the largest conurbation outside of London. It is a very unique and diverse region with a rich and proud record of achievement in sport and physical activity producing UK and world leading athletes.

In addition, it contains areas amongst the most deprived parts of the Country with some of the highest levels of inactivity in England. With the correlation between qualification levels, deprivation, participation in sport and physical activity and levels of health inequalities being well defined, the high percentage of the working age population with no qualifications in the Black Country, provides substantial challenge and opportunities for the region. Active Black Country recognises this and therefore aligns to a strategic framework which adopts a whole system approach. Working in collaboration with key stakeholders and partners, including Government, National Governing Bodies of Sport, West Midlands Combined Authority, local Authorities and community organisations, it aims to influence the physical activity and sport agenda at a national, regional and local level.

This document defines the Governance framework of Active Black Country detailing the Host, Board and ABC accountabilities, structure, remit and operating approach.

## 2.0 The remit and structure of Active Black Country

Active Black Country is one of 44 County Sports Partnerships (CSPs) in England and is principally funded by Sport England working to provide opportunities for people to participate in sport and physical activity across the Black Country.

### 2.1 Our Vision

We aim to make it easier for individuals and communities to be physically active. To be safe, secure, healthy and passionate about sport.

### 2.2 Our Mission

To demonstrate our passionate belief that in our local area, where socio-economic factors have created far reaching inequalities and inactivities, physical activity and Sport have the power the change lives.

### 2.3 Our Objectives

The 'Towards' An Active Black Country Strategic Framework' recognises the far reaching approach needed and identifies our 10 key outcomes focused around People, Place and Business:-

#### *People*

1. To reduce levels of obesity and inactivity by more people taking part
2. Communities getting local residents active
3. Lifelong activity habit for those early years to 18 years, supporting individual, physical and mental development
4. More people taking part due to a quality customer centric workforce

#### *Place*

5. More People walking, jogging and cycling on a network of quality and safe routes
6. More people active using quality facilities and access to the environment and landscape
7. A quality and sustainable Club and Community infrastructure which has attracted more people into sport and physical activity including volunteering

#### *Business*

8. A fit and agile workforce which has contributed to getting more people active and increased productivity
9. Technology being one of the motivators to encourage more people to take part including using open data
10. A vibrant sport and physical activity sector

### 2.4 Our Partners

The Active Black Country Partnership has taken its lead from Sport England strategy and aligned with the Local Enterprise partnerships strategic priorities, to position investment through programmes to target those areas in greatest need and realise a broader impact. We have sought to develop new

### 3.0 Governance structure

The diagram illustrates the governance structure of the Black Country Partnership. At the top is the 'BCC Ltd Guarantee Members' box, which includes 'Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton Local Authorities'. Below this is the 'Black Country Consortium Ltd (Host)' box. To the left of the Host is the 'Active Black Country Partnership Board' box, and to the right is the 'Black Country Board (Strategic Advisory Board)' box. At the bottom is the 'Active Black Country Partnership' box. Arrows indicate the following relationships: a solid arrow from the Host to the BCC Ltd Guarantee Members; a solid arrow from the Active Black Country Partnership to the Host; a dashed arrow from the Active Black Country Partnership to the Active Black Country Partnership Board; and a dotted arrow from the Host to the Black Country Board. A legend at the bottom right defines the line types: a solid line for 'Decision-making Body', a dotted line for 'Advisory Board', and an arrow for 'Accountable Body'.

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graph TD; BCC[BCC Ltd Guarantee Members  
Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and  
Wolverhampton Local Authorities]; Host[Black Country Consortium Ltd  
(Host)]; ABCPB[Active Black Country  
Partnership Board]; ABPP[Active Black Country  
Partnership]; BCB[Black Country Board  
(Strategic Advisory Board)]; Host --> BCC; ABPP --> Host; ABPP -.-> ABCPB; Host -.-> BCB;
```

— — Decision-making Body

..... Advisory Board

→ Accountable Body

Delegation of the day to day business of the Company is given to the Chief Executive Officer and Principal Officers of the organisation who operate as the Executive Directors and custodians of the SEP.

## 3.2 Active Black Country (ABC) – the “hosted” governance structure – The ABC Board

The Active Black Country Board functions as the decision making body of Active Black Country and has overall responsibility for the strategic co-ordination and planning of ABC’s activities, as well as holding it to account for the effective delivery of its operational plan.

Operating with Non-Executive Director status, Independent Board Members have voting rights for the Active Black Country Board and are, as such, subject to the code of conduct as set out within Company law and must operate for the best interests of the organisation. They do not hold voting rights as Non-Executive Directors within the ‘host’ organisation BCC Ltd.

Individuals who are Co-opted Independent Board Members are appointed for a one year period. They do not ABC Board voting rights and have been appointed as they bring specific skills and expertise to the Board whilst being supported to develop greater understanding of its remit and approach. At the end of their term they may be invited to apply, subject to Board approval, for a full Independent Board Member position.

Independent Board Members are comprised of an Independent Chair, Vice Chair (as Senior Independent Director) and capacity for up to a maximum of 12 Independent Board Members (inclusive of Co-opted Independent Members) who hold portfolio responsibilities including an Inclusion and Safeguarding Lead.

Two individuals are nominated to the Board on an annual basis as representatives from all four of the Black Country Local Authorities. They are usually selected as a Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing via the Association of Black Country Local Authorities (ABCA), and a Local Authority Public Health Director via the ABCA Chief Executives.

The ABC Board invites advisory members to attend Board meetings as they are recognised and valued as providing high quality non-biased, direction to the Board and ABC partnership. They do not operate as Independent Board members and therefore hold no ABC Board voting rights. The total number of advisory members, frequency of their attendance and duration of appointment can be determined by the Board on an individual basis and is subject to change based upon its needs and priorities.

The Board has the authority to establish sub committees and advisory groups as deemed appropriate to business need and has an Independent member sitting as representative on the BCC Ltd’s sub board Audit Committee.

The Independent Board members are subject to the eligibility criteria, terms of appointment, role descriptors, code of conduct and policies and procedures set out within the Board Handbook which forms part of the governance assurance framework and must be adhered to by its members at all times.

Quorum for the Active Black Country Board stipulates at least four members of the Board must be present (with at least two being Independent Board members) in order for business to be transacted with all decisions being made by a consensus approach. Any decisions to be put to the vote shall be decided by a majority of the Independent Members present and voting at that meeting. Minutes from the Board meetings are held on the Active Black Country website for public view.

The Chair of the Board delegates responsibility for the day to day management of the Active Black Country to the Active Black Country Director.

## 4.0 The Hosting Arrangement

Active Black Country is an unincorporated organisation, hosted by Black Country Consortium Ltd who are responsible for hosting, employing and providing services to enable ABC to carry out its operations.

### 4.1 Host Authority (BCC Ltd) powers

As the accountable body, the Host authority is empowered and authorised to:-

- Apply for awards and accept grants in its own names with the terms and conditions of any grant being binding on Active Black Country;
- Repay the grant if the terms and conditions of the grant are not met;
- Ensure that all necessary steps are taken to comply with suitable arrangements put in place to meet all standards set within its governance framework.

### 4.2 Host Authority (BCC Ltd) responsibilities

The Host authority will:-

- Meet statutory regulations and responsibilities as the direct employer of the Active Black Country Director and staff;
- Provide day to day support to, and management of, the Director, in partnership with the Chair of the Board;
- Provide access to the provision of the following services from within the BCC Ltd organisation:-
  - Human Resources and Health and Safety
  - IT
  - Marketing and Communications including PR
  - Financial reporting and accounting
  - Economic Intelligence and data insight
  - Programme Office data reporting
  - Secretariat services to the ABC Board
- Manage, in partnership with the Director, the Financial and Risk Management procedures relating to Active Black Country, specifically:-
  - Managing the receipt of any funds for use by Active Black Country
  - The establishment of financial monitoring systems, including audit which ensure accounting for funds is separately identifiable from the Host's own funds;
  - Producing an annual financial report providing a statement of accounts;
  - Producing a finance policy and agreed written administrative processes which meets compliance needs with Host arrangements and Sport England Code of Governance;
  - Producing agreed monthly and quarterly financial reports for the ABC Board, Audit Committee, sub-committees, management group and Director;
  - Establishing, maintaining and reporting on risks;
  - Ensuring compliance with the Host procurement policy;
  - Maintaining an official record of investment decisions and proceedings to ensure verification and compliance with any and all Audit Committee requirements;

- Maintenance of the bank account ensuring all proper transparent financial procedure is followed.
- Commissioning regular, independent (external) audit and assurance checks to verify that ABC is operating effectively within the terms of its agreed framework.
- Carrying out a Social Return on Investment analysis under the Black Country Performance Management Framework.

## 4.3 The Active Black Country (“hosted”) responsibilities:-

Active Black Country undertakes with the Host authority to comply with the conditions of the Assurance Framework and meet all defined responsibilities, specifically:-

- Compliance with the monitoring, auditing and review process of all funders;
- Ensuring the Host (BCC Ltd) is kept appraised, up to date and indemnified in respect of all liabilities, costs, claims, demands which the Host authority may incur.
- Ensuring all employees comply with any and all contracts of employment and policies and procedures put in place by the Host (BCC Ltd).
- Ensuring that value for money is achieved on all programmes undertaken.

## 5.0 Active Black Country Team

Active Black Country appoints a team of staff, employed by the Host (BCC Ltd), who provide leadership, direction, and operational management of the strategic framework.

### 5.1 Active Black Country Director

The Director has overall responsibility and accountability within Black Country Consortium Ltd to lead the Active Black Country partnership team. They have responsibility for carrying out the primary role of the CSP, effectively supporting the ABC Board and leading and developing a team to achieve strategic and operational objectives that contribute towards Black Country sport, physical activity and socio-economic priorities.

The Director is responsible to the Chair of the ABC Board and a direct report of the BCC Ltd (host) Chief Executive Officer. Specific responsibilities are detailed within the role specification which the individual is held account to through a monthly supervision meeting and annual appraisal process with their line manager.

An overview of their accountabilities includes:-

- To provide strategic leadership, management and performance monitoring of the Active Black Country partnership team.
- To effectively report to, and support the development of, the ABC Board, ensuring compliance with Governance Assurance Frameworks.
- To lead the development and implementation of the physical activity and sport strategic framework for Active Black Country.
- To be the lead representative for Active Black Country with all stakeholders including national, regional and local partners.
- To be the lead financial officer, in partnership with the BCC Ltd (the host) Company Accountant, to ensure the effective management of Active Black Country's financial performance and expenditure.
- To direct, approve and report on the delivery of Active Black Country's operational plan.

- To ensure Secretariat support is provided to local/regional Strategic Advisory Groups/Forums as agreed.

## 5.2 Active Black Country Officer group

The Officer group within the Active Black Country partnership have an operational focus and responsibility for carrying out and achieving the annual operational plan. Working to a job specification they are held to account through monthly supervision meetings and an annual appraisal with the Active Black Country Director.

As employees of the Host (BCC Ltd) they must act in accordance with all BCC Ltd employee policies, procedures and guidelines, mainly stipulated within the Employee Handbook.

## 5.3 Active Black Country Organisation chart

