KEY FACTS

- An active lifestyle is the key to improving and maintaining health. However, at present only 37% of men and 24% of women are sufficiently active to gain any health benefit. Three in ten boys and four in ten girls aged 2 to 15 are not meeting the recommended levels of physical activity.

- Physically active people have 20-30 per cent reduced risk of premature death and up to 50 per cent reduced risk of major chronic disease such as coronary heart disease, stroke diabetes and cancer.

- It can reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by up to 64 per cent in those at high risk of developing the disease.

- Regular physical activity is associated with a reduction in overall risk of cancer, including a clear protective effect on colon cancer, and is associated with a reduced risk of breast cancer after the menopause.

- Besides the human costs, the report highlighted an estimate for the cost of inactivity in England to be £8.2 billion annually. This excludes the contribution of physical inactivity to overweight and obesity, whose overall cost might run to £6.6–£7.4 billion per year according to recent estimates.
Inequalities exist

- People of higher socio-economic status take part in more physical activity in their leisure time. Rates of walking are two-thirds higher in professional classes compared with unskilled manual groups.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE SINCE CHOOSING HEALTH

- We have commissioned a Schools Physical Activity Toolkit to bring together all the different strands of physical activity in schools. The project will result in a user-friendly resource that guides schools toward meeting the criteria of the national Healthy school physical activity theme. Alongside the toolkit, deliverables will include training for Healthy Schools co-ordinators.

- The National School Sport Strategy is targeting action through School Sport Partnerships to increase sports participation by the groups that traditionally have been marginalised by sport e.g. increasing girls’ participation in PE lessons and out of school activities by placing emphasis on communication, teamwork, problem solving and health-related exercise and creating a women’s fitness group (which includes mother and daughter sessions).

- Cycling England has added to the £10 million of DfT funding from 2004/05 with a further £5.625 Million for the ‘Links to Schools’ programme which provides safe walking and cycling routes to schools from residential areas via the National Cycle Network. Over 450 schools are expected to benefit by 2007.

- Bikeability, the new cycling proficiency standard for the 21st century, has been developed by Cycling England and its partners. Bikeability will be rolled out across the country from Spring 2007, with the aim that by 2009 half of all year six pupils in England will be trained through schemes awarding the new standard.

- DfT has been working with large employers and employer organisations to promote the spread of employer-backed cycling schemes encouraging employees to cycle to their workplace, including the publication of ‘Cycle to Work’ guidance on tax-efficient cycle loan schemes.

- Through the joint DH/DFES/Youth Sport Trust ‘Schools on the Move’ initiative, we have piloted the use of pedometers in schools both as a tool to support a wide range of curriculum topics and to increase awareness amongst pupils of the need to be active. The initiative included resource materials for schools, teachers and young people to help integrate pedometers into the life of the school. The pilot demonstrated that pedometers can increase children’s activity levels and encourage them to walk to school.

- DCMS has published Time for Play: encouraging greater play opportunities for children and young people. This document sets out what Government is doing on play and discusses recent changes in the delivery of children’s services. The BIG Lottery Fund have made available £155m to Local Authorities to create, improve and develop play provision, and develop innovative practice.
WHERE WE ARE HEADING

- Finishing touches are being made to a National Delivery Plan to seize the opportunities for improving both physical and mental wellbeing, and tackling health inequalities, presented by London’s hosting of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. This will help deliver a fitter Britain by 2012 and a lasting health legacy following the Games.

- The Minister of State for Public Health, Caroline Flint was asked by the Prime Minister in April 2006 to lead an inter-ministerial group to increase physically activity and fitness in the community. Initially her focus will be on emphasising the importance of ministers championing work that is already underway and a cross-government approach.

- The inter-ministerial group on physical activity is made up of DCMS, DCLG, DfT, DfES, Defra and delivery bodies such as Sport England. The group will encourage a ‘Small Change Big Difference’ approach, looking at supporting the public to make minor changes that will make a long-term difference to their health.

- The group will focus on adults who are least active and try to build physical activity into daily routines, including walking and cycling to work (active travel) and look at the role of employers. The group will also explore options for delivery mechanisms and how to optimise data collection.

- The biggest gains to health and to the economy will be made by encouraging more physical activity among the sedentary, the overweight/obese and older people. The Health Survey for England published in August, forecasts levels of obesity in adults and children for 2010. For men, obesity prevalence is expected increase from 22% in 2003 to 33% in 2010. There is also a clear link between sedentary, inactive adults and obesity.

- DCMS and DfES, are making good progress on the National School Sport Strategy (with £1.5 billion already invested over five years to 2008). The strategy is on course to meet their target of having at least 75% of 5 to 16 year olds doing a minimum of two hours of PE and school sport a week by the end of the year.

WE WILL HAVE DELIVERED IF

- The Healthy Living social marketing campaign linked to Small Change Big Difference, and promoting healthy active living is launched in 2007 with a focus on parents/carers of under 11s.

- 85% of 5 to 16 year olds spend a minimum of two hours each week on high quality PE and school sport within and beyond the curriculum by 2008.

- Every school has a travel plan by 2010 and there is an increase in proportion of children walking and cycling to school.

- People have increased their levels of activity towards the target of 5 x 30 minutes moderately strenuous exercise every week.

- There is a reduction in the proportion of adults engaged in only 30 minutes or less of physical activity per week.

- The proportion of adults who walk and cycle either for travel, or for recreation increases.

- The proportion of adults engaged in sport increases by 3% by 2008, particularly from the priority groups.