

Learning note: What works in the schools and education environment

Introduction

This learning note explores lessons learned about what works in **sportscotland** supported work in the schools and education environment.

It draws on 2018 evaluation reports produced by Research Scotland.



The learning note is for people working in these environments, to encourage reflection on practice and sharing of learning between **sportscotland** supported staff and external partners.

Offering wide ranging opportunities

sportscotland supported work in schools and education clearly increases the number and variety of sport and activity opportunities. Active Schools has introduced new activities to schools; supported previously inactive pupils to become more active; developed school to club links which have enabled pupils to go on and take part in club activity; and introduced new school sport competition opportunities.

Often, this work has involved targeted approaches and small group work to engage people less likely to be active. For more information, a separate learning note on equality in the schools and education environment has also been produced.

“Without Active Schools the quality and quantity of school sport would be greatly diminished.”

Teacher

Developing pathways and competition opportunities

Where Active Schools teams were positive about the effectiveness of pathways, they stressed the value of joint work with those in the clubs and communities environment. School sport competition opportunities also played an important role in pathway development.

Example:

In one area, the SSCO carried out an audit of every secondary school to explore existing opportunities for competition, popular sports and pathways. The SSCO then identified gaps in provision, discussed these with the Active Schools team and identified a number of key sports within which they aimed to increase participation levels, develop sustainable pathways and offer competition opportunities.

Developing school to club links

Links developed by Active Schools teams include curricular and extra-curricular links; volunteering links; holiday programmes; taster sessions; and promotional links. Links were particularly effective where Active Schools teams worked with other **sportscotland** supported staff, particularly Community Sport Hub officers.

For more detail, please see the separate learning note on school to club links.

Supporting inactive pupils to become more active

Some Active Schools activity has engaged previously inactive people, and supported them to become more active. Some stakeholders felt that this was a key priority for the future, with scope for more focus on engaging inactive pupils.

Example:

In one area, the Active Schools team supported pupil engagement within core PE at school. Four club coaches worked alongside the PE teacher with S3 and S4 pupils. Coaches supported staff to increase their knowledge around the development of specific core skills within their particular sport. Young people participated in PE more often and with greater motivation due to the variety of activities on offer. Previously inactive pupils have since joined the clubs that these coaches are attached to. This was a significant achievement for the Active Schools team which had previously found it hard to engage these inactive pupils.

Targeted approaches

Targeted sessions or small group work were seen as useful approaches to engage people who were under-represented in Active Schools activity. For more detail, please see the separate learning note on equality in the schools and education environment.

Example:

In one school, the Active Schools team worked with Young Ambassadors to organise a survey of girls to find out what they wanted to do. From this it was clear that they wanted girls only activities, and that they didn't want to do competitive sport. As a result, the Young Ambassadors and ASC worked together to offer activities that are fun and less competitive through their Active Girls programme – including Zumba, dance and girls only football.

Developing skilled deliverers

The skills of Active Schools deliverers were generally rated highly. The wide bank of volunteers involved in delivery enables Active Schools to have its reach and range.

However, it can be time consuming and challenging to build a consistent pool of volunteers, with high quality skills.

Many Active Schools teams had focused strongly on developing the skills of their deliverers, and recognising their valuable input. This included making best use of:

- college and university students;
- senior pupils; and
- teachers.

“We have a good volunteer pathway and structure giving them benefits of volunteering and they get better rewards with the more hours they volunteer e.g. t-shirt, water bottle, jacket, access to training, money towards a UKCC1.”

ASC

Building the capacity of students and senior pupils

Young people play a very important role in delivering Active Schools activity. Many Active Schools teams have invested in supporting the development of senior pupils as volunteers. Pupils are important role models, and also develop their leadership skills and confidence. Students at college and universities can also be a useful resource in supporting Active Schools delivery, and building the strength of the delivery pool.

Example:

In one area, the Active Schools team has worked towards the development of an effective coaching pathway for senior pupils. This pathway involves pupils starting off on an apprenticeship scheme in S4. These pupils are given various coaching placements during their S4. Those who show commitment and talent are then considered for places on either the young coach programme, or the young coach academy in S5. Both of these programmes see senior pupils move into specialised coaching placements, with each getting access to a UKCC course in their chosen sport.

Example:

In one area, approximately 100 college and university sports students are involved in Active Schools delivery. This has helped to upskill students, who aim to become coaches. As part of this project, students go on work placements to practice their coaching skills. Over a few years, this has resulted in a more skilled coaching workforce being available locally, which has helped to increase the quality of opportunities delivered.

Building the capacity of teachers

Active Schools teams acknowledged the importance of upskilling their volunteers and offered a comprehensive range of opportunities to help their volunteers to develop

their skills and to gain relevant qualifications. This included CPD opportunities for teachers, and joint approaches to delivery.

Example:

In one area, school staff and club staff worked together to deliver sessions in partnership. Over a six week block, club staff led sessions every second week – with school staff shadowing. On the other weeks, the school staff would oversee learning independently. The feedback from school staff was very positive, with all demonstrating an increased confidence in delivering sport sessions. All were willing to continue the programme in the future, with many indicating that this could now be completed without the need for club involvement.



Supporting strong leaders and role models

<p>The Young Ambassadors programme was viewed positively, with ambassadors seen as great role models and an excellent resource for schools.</p> <p>Young Ambassadors broadly had a positive experience, and felt well supported both locally and nationally.</p>	<p>“It has definitely met my expectations. I have really enjoyed being a Young Ambassador.”</p> <p>Young Ambassador</p>
<p>Qualifications and skills development</p> <p>Approaches worked particularly well where Young Ambassadors were able to access qualifications and experience which was relevant to their future development.</p> <p>Example: Some Young Ambassadors said that through their involvement, they had been able to achieve Scottish governing body qualifications, for example in swimming, netball and gymnastics. This enabled them to coach and lead sessions in school, in cluster primary schools, and in holiday camps.</p> <p>Example: In one school, Young Ambassadors ran a programme of taster sessions over the year. They organised and ran a different activity each term. They have also been instrumental in forming a school sports committee, they led the school sports day and also helped to apply for a School Sport Award. The Young Ambassadors received intensive support initially, but as they progressed they became more confident and developed their potential.</p>	
<p>Connected leadership opportunities</p> <p>Where Active Schools teams had linked leadership opportunities with wider education leadership programmes in operation in the area, they felt this created more sustainable, accessible and connected leadership opportunities.</p> <p>Example: In one school, senior pupils are required to undertake volunteering in school and in the community as part of their Sport and Recreation module. The pupils worked with the ASC to access work experience in local clubs. This programme links with the local authority leadership programme, which pupils are encouraged to take part in throughout primary and secondary school.</p>	

Linking with wider education priorities

<p>Most teachers felt that there was a lot of alignment between sportscotland supported work in schools, and wider schools and education outcomes. Many ASCs and teachers highlighted that leadership opportunities were helping pupils to become confident individuals and responsible citizens.</p> <p>Links were strongest where there were strong partnerships between Active Schools teams, local authority education officers, and schools. These relationships, while time consuming to build, then underpinned strong joint work around attainment and other key education priorities.</p>	<p>“Sport can bridge the attainment gap.”</p> <p>Teacher</p>
<p>Example: In one local authority area, the authority works in close partnership with sportscotland. The authority uses sport as a driver for improvement, and a key part of its strategy to raise attainment. ASCs have received training in raising attainment in literacy and numeracy, so that they are using the same language as teachers in the activities that they are delivering for pupils. This helps to contribute to children’s learning and make connections with teachers. Teachers value the role of ASCs as they see them contributing to the attainment agenda.</p>	

Working in rural areas

<p>Some rural areas face particular barriers to delivering a range of quality opportunities – with challenges around transport, timing of sessions, access to facilities and access to skilled coaches.</p> <p>It is important to recognise that these barriers exist, and that innovative and smaller scale approaches may need to be taken.</p> <p>Making the effort is worthwhile, as a few pupils in remote and rural areas felt that without Active Schools they wouldn’t have many other opportunities to do sport and physical activity.</p>	<p>“If Active Schools wasn’t here, we wouldn’t have as much to do because there isn’t much here on the island.”</p> <p>Primary pupil</p>
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Possible approaches include:

- running young people's activities at the same time as adults, to allow families to coordinate their activities;
- virtual competition opportunities; and
- introducing new sports through connecting with experts outwith the area.

Example: family activities

In one rural area, the Active Schools team planned young people's activities at the same time as opportunities for a range of age groups, including adults. This means that families can travel to the centre for one trip, be active separately, and then finish their activities at roughly the same time.

Example: virtual competition

In one area, four schools in rural communities were given the opportunity to compete against one another virtually – with no need for travel. This allowed pupils to compete in a structured environment through 'virtual games'. It also helped to raise the profile of Active Schools among parents, resulting in some parent volunteers coming forward to run sessions.

Example: new opportunities

In one island school, a Young Ambassador felt that Active Schools had helped to develop a range of opportunities and activities, and provide new opportunities. For example, the ASC introduced a new sport – lacrosse – through arranging for a coach to visit from the mainland. The Young Ambassador also felt that the opportunities were very well organised through Active Schools.

Find out more...

[Full evaluation report](#)

[Learning note: equalities](#)

[Learning note: school to club links](#)

ASOF research, Research Resource and Research Scotland

Research evidencing the contribution of **sportscotland** to the Active Scotland Outcomes Framework

<https://sportscotland.org.uk/about-us/our-publications/archive/asof-contribution/>