

Learning note: Equality in the schools and education environment

Introduction

This learning note explores lessons learned about equality in **sportscotland** supported work in the schools and education environment. It draws on 2018 evaluation reports undertaken 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.

Girls and young women



Overall, more young men than young women take part in Active Schools activity. Young men also generally take part more often. The gap largely exists at secondary school level.

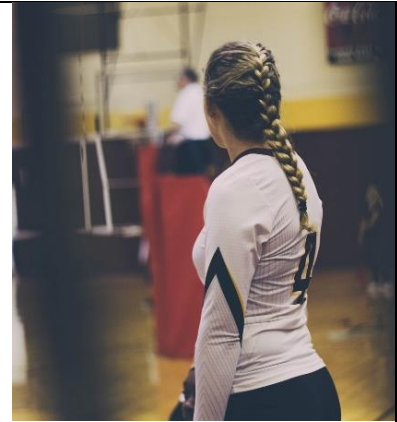
In 2016, just over **44 per cent** of the male school roll took part in Active Schools, and **42 per cent** of the female school roll. While this difference does not sound large, it is the equivalent of **2.7 million** more Active Schools visits by young men than young women between 2011 and 2016.

Levels of participation are varied across the country. Areas which have the highest levels of Active Schools participation are more likely to have more young men taking part in Active Schools activities than young women.

Active Schools teams, teachers, deliverers and pupils felt that the most important things to do in order to successfully involve girls and young women were:

Gather girls' opinions

Clearly, girls and young women are all individuals with different preferences, needs, priorities and passions. Everyone emphasised the importance of asking girls and young women what they want to do and when, and planning based on what they say. It is also vital to find out what girls think of the activities they take part in, and use this to help your planning processes. Young Ambassadors, Active Girls groups and other young decision makers can be a very useful resource here.



Example:

In one area, an ASC found it hard to engage secondary school girls in sport. The ASC worked with a group of female college students to interview girls at secondary schools. They explored what was stopping them from getting involved in clubs, and what they would like to be involved in.

Girls only activities

Almost everyone felt that it was important to have some girls only activities. This doesn't mean that all activities for girls and women are girls only. Girls should still be encouraged to join in wider activity too. But girls only activities give young people the chance to build their confidence, focus on the activities they want and be inspired by positive role models. This type of activity might include small scale, targeted activity aiming to involve young women who don't normally participate.

Girls only activities already used included trampolining, netball, basketball, dance, boxercise, circuit training, football, mountain biking and many, many more...

Example:

In one secondary school, the Young Ambassadors set up a girls only lunchtime activity group. The group discuss and choose their own sessions, and the Young Ambassadors run activities and promote sport across the school.

A welcoming environment

Many felt that often, girls and young women preferred to take part in sports and physical activities which were less competitive and more sociable. These activities need to be welcoming and fun, and build in enough time for young women to comfortably get changed – preferably with good facilities including hairdryers and decent showers. Activities also need to be planned bearing in mind other priorities for the young participants – such as having a healthy lunch.



Focus on sports leadership

Although more young men than women take part in Active Schools overall, this trend reverses for leadership opportunities. More young women than young men take part in **sportscotland** supported leadership opportunities. These leadership opportunities help to build strong role models and inspire other girls and young women. It also gives young women the chance to be involved in sport without having to directly participate or compete. However, it is important that young women are supported to be involved in participation activity if they want to be.

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.

“I definitely feel like a role model.”

Young Ambassador,
female

Young people with additional support needs

A high proportion of pupils at schools for young people with additional support needs take part in Active Schools – with just over **50 per cent** taking part. From 2017/18, **sportscotland** is gathering monitoring information on the number of young people with additional support needs participating in mainstream Active Schools activity.

While most Active Schools teams felt that their work had been successful in supporting people with additional support needs, **a quarter** felt that they had no impact or had been unsuccessful in this field. Many deliverers also expressed concern about their ability to engage with young people with additional support needs. While teachers largely felt that Active Schools teams worked well to support children with additional support needs, a small proportion of parents felt that Active Schools deliverers did not meet the needs of their child in terms of inclusion.

The approaches which were felt to work well included:

Clear responsibility

Some found that having a team member with a clear responsibility for engaging children with additional support needs was important – including for both schools for children with additional support needs and mainstream schools. Often this involved using data to identify pupils with additional support needs, and developing a targeted programme of activities.



Developing deliverer skills

Deliverers were keen for more training on working with young people with additional support needs – for example on behaviour management or communication methods. They also highlighted the value of parental involvement, to encourage and support children to be involved.

Example:

In one area, the ASC has worked to set up an inclusive multi sports club at lunchtime. This club is for pupils with additional support needs and pupils who may not find other clubs as accessible. Young leaders at the school have received specialised training on running inclusive activities. This has been very successful in involving ASN pupils.

Good links and partnerships

Often, successful approaches were developed through close joint working with teachers, support staff, third sector organisations, health professionals and disability professionals.

Example:

In one area, the ASC built links between a table tennis club, the local disability sport organisation, and community sport leaders from a high school. Together, they planned and delivered a table tennis event for pupils from local schools for young people with additional support needs. The young leaders received four hours of training, delivered by the table tennis club and the disability sport organisation. The event helped to increase the number of disabled athletes participating at the club, and gave young leaders the opportunity to volunteer in school and at the club.

As with the lessons learned around girls and young people, some also found that it was helpful to:

- set up some clubs specifically for children with additional support needs; and
- speak to young people with additional support needs about their preferences and experiences.

Young people from disadvantaged areas

Schools with high levels of deprivation are more likely to have high levels of Active Schools participation than schools with medium or low levels of deprivation. From 2017/18, **sportscotland** will gather more in depth information on the number of pupils participating from the 20 per cent most deprived areas in Scotland.

Analysis of schools with a School Sport Award shows that schools in the most deprived areas - where more than 80 per cent of pupils are from the most deprived areas - are least likely to have a School Sport Award.

While most Active Schools teams felt that their work had been successful in supporting people from areas of socio-economic deprivation, **a quarter** felt that they had no impact or had been unsuccessful in this field. Deliverers were reasonably confident about engaging with young people from areas of socio-economic deprivation.

Most teachers who took part in the evaluation felt that activities were inclusive. A few teachers felt that more could be done to make sure that pupils who were disadvantaged and may be less likely to be active were included and proactively targeted.

Successful approaches included:

Building relationships

Having people to build relationships with children and families more widely was seen to be very important. Some found that activities that involve the whole family worked well, based on strong engagement with children and parents. Some used data from within the schools environment to identify young people from areas of deprivation, and specifically target work with these young people and families.

Example:

In one area, specific targeted work has been undertaken with pupils in a nurture base at one of the local schools. The aim is to inspire pupils to be their personal best and learn from failure. Pupils are identified through joint work with the school, and the programme involves sharing days which involve pupils, parents and teachers.

Removing financial barriers

Many felt it was vital to provide free and affordable opportunities. Approaches used included breakfast and lunch clubs, after school and holiday clubs, and support with free bus passes and sports club memberships. Often activities were adapted to ensure pupils from deprived areas could attend, such as proactively targeting specific young people, providing transport, or holding clubs at lunchtime to reduce transport needs.

Positive role models

The evaluation highlighted the importance of having deliverers, including young people, who are able to inspire, motivate and engage young people.

Example:

In one area, schools within areas of high deprivation have been supplied with sports leaders. These young people know better than anyone the challenges of growing up in the area, and the young participants respect them. This helps to create a flexible and positive environment.

Impact on equalities groups

A connected survey of almost 15,000 pupils across Scotland found that Active Schools participants across equalities characteristics achieved very positive outcomes. Active Schools participants across equalities characteristics were equally as likely to:

- say that participating in Active Schools made them want to be more active in the future;
- feel more confident about the development of their sport and physical activity skills through Active Schools; and
- say that taking part in sport and physical activity generally made them happy.

Planning and delivery based on evidence

Every child and young person should have the opportunity to participate in sport. In order to increase diversity and reduce inequalities, it is important to understand who is currently participating.

sportscotland is extending its data collection for Active Schools from 2017/18, using a phased approach. This will include equalities monitoring for age, deprivation and additional support needs or disability.

Improved data will help to inform planning and demonstrate impact. More importantly, it will provide everyone with powerful information about participants, and help to reflect on how to make activity as accessible as possible.

Overarching messages

Across all equalities groups, the key approaches that were successful were:

- **working with young people** – to find out what they want to do, identify barriers and build relationships;
- **working jointly with others** – including schools, social work, community learning and development, health and third sector organisations;
- **small group work** – targeted activity with lower adult to pupil ratios; and
- **addressing practical barriers** – particularly transport, through providing after school transport or holding activities during school time.

Find out more...

Equality and sport research

sportscotland commissioned research into equality in sport

<https://sportscotland.org.uk/about-us/equality-at-sportscotland/equality-and-sport-research/>

sportscotland equality outcomes

What sportscotland as an organisation aims to achieve in terms of equality

<https://sportscotland.org.uk/media/2591/equality-outcomes-2017.pdf>

Active Girls

<https://sportscotland.org.uk/schools/active-girls/>

Inclusive Community Resources

Help to be inclusive, open to everyone and attract under-represented groups.

<https://sportscotland.org.uk/clubs/help-for-clubs/people/inclusive-community/>

SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation)

An introduction to the SIMD is available at

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00504809.pdf>

Further SIMD tools and resources available at

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SIMD>