

Changing attitudes to sport through curriculum co-development

Background

The Chief Medical Officer suggests that young people should be active for 60 mins every day, yet in Surrey the majority of 11-18 year olds are not achieving this and also report a low opinion of the opportunities to be active available to them in school.

Caused in part by a lack of confidence amongst school staff, we wanted to address this and highlight the link between pupil engagement in physical activity and their self worth / wellbeing, as well as the link to wider school attainment.

Surveys carried out by Sport England & Sheffield Hallam University with Youth Sport Trust, Activity Alliance & Association for PE, June & July 2021



18% of secondary aged students in Surrey are active for 30+ mins everyday



35% of students are active for 30+ mins on 3 days or less each week



52% of students do not think that sport at school has any impact on their academic work



96% of staff said PA had a positive or very positive impact on academic achievement



Only 41% of school staff agreed that their school had a plan for developing physical activity in school



How we responded



Having secured Sport England funding, we consulted leadership teams and secondary schools pupils to determine where improvements might be made. This insight was used to draw up and share an initial menu of CPD and resources for Secondary Teacher Training.

Where schools had requested further support, we offered 1:1 consultations with experts using our links with local universities. Schools which came forward received support which helped them focus on topics such as what the wider school staff body understood about the purpose and reach of PE; and how to set up a sustainable model for gaining pupil voice.

Supplemented by meetings with other specialists in outdoor learning, secondary schools have been helped to develop bespoke plans that best meet the needs of their pupils.

Teacher & student training

Monthly newsletters now detail upcoming CPD and each school's leadership team receives a summary of the benefits accrued from their involvement. They can also participate in termly meetings with PE Scholar to discuss curriculum development CPD. With additional training and development opportunities from the Youth Sport Trust, plus sessions from selected National Governing Bodies of sport, schools' subject-related training needs are comprehensively met. Alongside all of this, development of pupils' soft skills hasn't been forgotten. Through Active Leaders and Sports Leaders UK, schools have brought new emphasis to the leadership and lifeskills aspects of their PE curriculum, increasing pupil awareness of the wider benefits of moving more and equipping them with skills which they can take into volunteering and employment.



“Best practical CPD I have been on for years. Pitched at exactly the right level with lots of fun ideas to take away.”

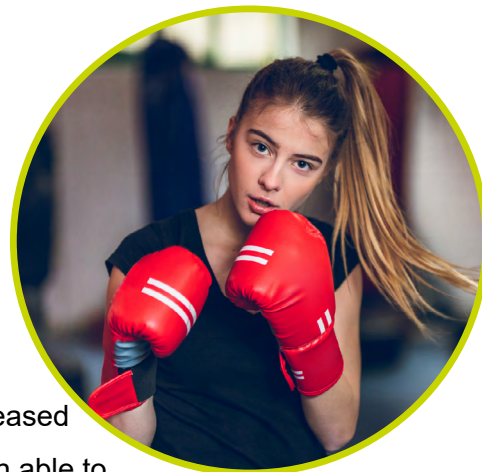
Secondary teacher training attendee

What we achieved

Definitive results won't be available until the end of the project but at time of writing (spring 2022) we've experienced an improvement in engagement and collaboration with secondary schools.

Schools are more likely to offer new CPD suggestions based in part on pupil voice and they've broadened their extra-curricular activities, resulting in more young people getting active, more often.

One school has included boxing in their curriculum mix and report increased participation and enthusiasm from pupils, while another has finally been able to make use of gymnastics equipment that had previously been sitting idle due to a lack of experience among teaching staff. And a local Pupil Referral Unit has been supported to introduce a structured PE curriculum, with an emphasis on lifeskills training to increase the employability of their young people.



What we learned

Persistence has been key in improving communication with schools. Establishing connections with leadership teams and having regular, limited contact has been essential in getting their buy-in to release staff for training.

A 'whole problem' approach has proved valuable, with pedagogy and deeper cross-curriculum considerations sitting alongside activity/sport-specific training for teachers. This has been coupled with an explanation of the wider benefits of physical activity for pupils – helping to create an internal demand that can now be met by newly trained teaching staff.

None of this would have happened without dedicated funding which has helped us take an insight led approach and then match the specific needs of each school with the resources and training available. Previously, scarce resources within schools has meant physical activity for pupils has often been 'deprioritised', while a lack of contact and best practice sharing amongst institutions has led to the topic falling further from consideration.



What next?

The project runs until August but we are hoping to consolidate the gains made by continuing regular meetings with secondary staff and offering a coordinated CPD offer to boost teacher and pupil development.

