

Impact case study (REF3b2)

Institution: Canterbury Christ Church University
Unit of Assessment: Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism (26)
Title of case study: Improving Physical Activity Levels among Less Active Young People

1. Summary of the impact

With its origins in work commencing in 2004, research within the *Centre for Sport, Physical Education & Activity Research (SPEAR)* since 2010 has helped guide and inform national interventions and policy to increase physical activity and sport participation among less active young people by identifying the processes most successful in increasing such participation. Specifically, the work has: (a) provided a rationale for government (Department of Health) and commercial (LloydsTSB) investment in school sport initiatives targeting the least active; (b) contributed to the wider evidence-base used by policy makers; (c) contributed to programme improvements in Change4Life School Sport Clubs and National School Sport Weeks (NSSW); (d) impacted on young people’s engagement and physical activity levels.

2. Underpinning research

An initial report for the World Health Organisation (1) showed that although girls are less active than boys, they do enjoy participating in physical activity and sport. As such, rather than the received wisdom that efforts should focus on ‘girl-friendly’ sports, the research suggested greater benefits would be achieved by making sport and physical activity more ‘child-friendly’ and ‘youth friendly’. Specifically, that fun, health, social interaction and skill development should be prioritised over sporting outcomes, and that the problem lies not with girls, or indeed other less active young people, themselves, but with the way in which physical activities are constructed and presented. More novel activities, which do not come with pre-conceptions about how they have previously been presented and delivered within schools, were suggested as having particular potential.

However, the primary underpinning research for this case study are 5 evaluations of NSSW (2,4) and 3 evaluations of Change4Life School Sport Clubs (3,4). The research showed that the programmes had impressive reach, with over 9 million young people taking part in NSSWs (2010-2013) (2), and approaching quarter of a million young people joining one of the 8,000+ Change4Life Clubs (3); however, more significant is the impact on the less active. While 60% of all participants in NSSW 2012 said they wanted to do more sport following the week, two-thirds of primary and half of secondary pupils that rarely participated in sports outside PE, said NSSW made them want to do more sport. A 6 month follow-up showed that 91% of participants who said they wanted to do more sport were actually doing more 6 months later. Based on a sample of over 4,500 directly surveyed 8-15 year olds, analysis by age and activity level showed that themes of novelty, fun and learning about new sports were more attractive to the less active. However, less than 25% of pupils who joined clubs in new sports were able to join a club linked to their school. Qualitative insights showed that a key attraction was the perception of ownership and choice about what activities to do, which was contrasted with PE lessons, and that recommendations from friends was a key factor in joining new clubs in sports tried during the week. Finally, GIS analysis of registration data showed that while overall numbers of schools participating in the programme were relatively stable, there was a high rate of turnover and a low rate of retention, with teacher surveys suggesting that schools actively weighed the benefits of participation each year against other potential initiatives, rather than simply re-registering because they had done so in the past.

Over the 3 years of secondary Change4Life Clubs, 110,000 young people participated, of whom 98,000 are now positive about sport and choosing to play weekly, including 71% of those formerly least active (3,4). Over 90% of participants said they now feel more confident doing sport and enjoy PE more. However, the first year evaluation showed that the reach of clubs among the less active could be doubled if less active pupils were more effectively targeted, and that poorly defined exit routes to appropriate participation pathways were creating a bottleneck that restricted turnover and new member recruitment. The primary Change4Life Clubs, introduced a year later, learned the lessons of the first year of the secondary programme, with 85% of recruited members being less active. The first year research for primary Change4Life Clubs showed physical activity changes occurred early, but positive changes in self-esteem and confidence took longer, thus schools that ran clubs for the suggested 12 weeks or less saw less sustainable participation improvements than those running for longer. In the first 2 years of the primary programme, the research (based on a nationally distributed 3 time point repeated measures sample of over 2,000 directly surveyed 7-9 year olds) showed that clubs reached 115,000 young people, 57% of whom now achieve 60 active

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minutes on most days of the week, with those achieving 60 active minutes every day increasing by 92%. Across primary and secondary clubs, participation increases were shown to be linked to: being respected and respecting others regardless of ability, increases in self-esteem and confidence, provision of a safe and inclusive space for less active children to play and be active, the opportunity to contribute to club delivery, and the encouragement of small steps toward increasing physical activity levels. Overall, the research concluded that a club-style model delivered in schools with a focus on processes shown to engage the less active in participation and leadership is a very effective mechanism for physical activity behaviour change in the less active.

The WHO work (1) was carried out at CCCU in 2004-05 by Prof Bailey (2003 - 2006), Dismore (2003 - 2008) and **Wellard** (2003 -). The more recent work (2,3,4) was carried out at CCCU between 2010 and 2013 by Researchers **Dowse** (2008 -) and **Foad** (2007 -), Reader, **Wellard** and Prof **Weed** (2006 -) (all included in REF1).

3. References to the research

- (1) Bailey, R., Wellard, I. & Dismore, H. (2005) Girl's Participation in Physical Activities and Sports: Benefits, Patterns, Influences and Ways Forward. Geneva: World Health Organisation.
- (2) SPEAR (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013a, 2013b) Evaluations of National School Sport Weeks. Unpublished Reports to Youth Sport Trust and LloydsTSB.
- (3) SPEAR (2011, 2012, 2013) Evaluations of Change4Life School Sport Clubs in Primary and Secondary Schools. Reports to Youth Sport Trust and Department of Health.
- (4) Wellard, I. (2013) Sport, Fun and Enjoyment: An Embodied Approach. London Routledge.

These outputs cover 3 separately commissioned projects. They were each commissioned by competitive tender by the World Health Organisation (1), the Youth Sport Trust and LloydsTSB (2) and the Youth Sport Trust and the Department of Health (3). Following commissioning, research designs for (1) and (3) were subject to scrutiny and feedback by research analysts in the World Health Organisation and the Department of Health respectively, and in the latter case also by the research and evaluation team at the Youth Sport Trust. Similarly, final reports were subject to a process of review, critique and feedback prior to endorsement and release. A similar process of post-commissioning scrutiny of research designs and post-research review of reports was undertaken by the Youth Sport Trust team and the projects team at LloydsTSB for (2). Wellard's book (4), which underwent peer-review at the proposal stage, includes chapters on (2) and (3). Output (1) has been endorsed by UNESCO and ICSSPE, output (3) by the Department of Health as a "robust independent evaluation" to a House of Commons Select Committee, and specifically by two successive Public Health Ministers (Sourby and Ellison), whilst (2) are cited as part of the case for the incorporation of NSSW within the government's Public Health Responsibility Deal.

4. Details of the impact

(a) Providing a rationale for investment (immediate users)

Jane Ellison, the Minister for Public Health, noted in November 2013 (5) that *SPEAR's* research on Change4Life Clubs "demonstrates the value of these clubs", and used *SPEAR's* data on physical activity increases as a rationale for existing and continued investment in 13,500 school Change4Life Clubs. Although this speech took place after the end of the impact period, the impact described (that the research provided the rationale for existing and continuing investment) falls clearly within the impact period, as the investment commenced in 2010 and the research has been reported to government from July 2011. In fact, similar comments were made a year earlier by Anne Sourby (6), the previous Minister for Public Health, who noted that the *SPEAR* research demonstrated that Change4Life Clubs were "an effective way of making sport and physical activity a lifelong habit", and used this to support the £8.4m government investment in the programme. Finally, the Department of Health's submission to the House of Commons Select Committee on School Sport (7) used *SPEAR's* Change4Life research findings as part of the case for their investment of £120m in school sport targeting children who are disengaged from sport.

Similarly, LloydsTSB specifically note that "the reach of the programme into 89% of schools" (data provided by *SPEAR's* research) was why "we wanted to extend this opportunity in the year after London 2012" (8). In addition, the rationale for a LloydsTSB pledge in 2012 as part of the Department of Health's Public Health Responsibility Deal to "inspire young people in schools across the UK to take part in more sport...through National School Sport Week" is provided by *SPEAR* research data on engagement in previous years, with the evidence that the pledge has been achieved to be provided by *SPEAR's* research in 2012 (9). Finally, *SPEAR* data on

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participation levels across the life of the NSSW programme was used as part of a narrative about LloydsTSB's role in The Journey to 2012 in its TV advertising campaign in the summer of 2012.

(b) Contributing to the wider evidence-base used by policy-makers (intermediate users)

Despite being undertaken in 2004, the work on girls participation has continuing contemporary currency in contributing to international, national and regional policy-making evidence. For example, in 2012 alone UNESCO cite the work as part of their advocacy brief for empowering girls and women through sport (10), Canadian Sport for Life use the work in their strategy for Actively Engaging Women and Girls (11) and Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association use it as evidence for their Physical Activity Recreation Engagement Strategy (12).

In the UK, *SPEAR's* research on the first year of Change4Life clubs, which demonstrated the efficacy of a club model delivered in schools, was part of the evidence base that informed Sport England's £41m commitment in its 2012-17 strategy, Creating a Sporting Habit for Life (13), to ensure that every secondary school in England will be offered a community sport club on its site. *SPEAR's* Change4Life research is also included in the Department of Health report on the evidence base for physical education and sport in schools (14) and the Sport and Recreation Alliance's report on the evidence base for the wider impact of sport (15), noting specifically that initiatives often fail to reach the least active as a result of poor targeting and recruitment, and that the engagement of the least active is dependent on creating an environment where people both feel respected and respect others regardless of their ability. The Department of Health's submission of findings from the *SPEAR* Change4Life research to the House of Commons Select Committee on School Sport (7) is also a contribution to the wider evidence-base for policy to engage the least active young people in sport.

Press releases generated by LloydsTSB focus, of course, on what *SPEAR's* research says about the positive impact of NSSW. However, in 2012/13 the releases also included *SPEAR's* insights on the importance of stronger club links, particularly the awareness of such links among pupils, who are important in promoting the clubs through word of mouth to their friends, and noting that less than a quarter of NSSW participants who joined new clubs were able to join a club directly linked to their school (8). These releases generated 280 pieces of press coverage in 2012/13, with a PR value of £1.8m (16) and thus will have considerably raised awareness of these issues among policy-makers, practitioners and the wider public.

(c) Contributing to programme improvement (immediate users)

At the end of the school year in July each year a summary of the *SPEAR* Change4Life research and the way in which the Youth Sport Trust and other stakeholders will address *SPEAR's* recommendations is developed by the Youth Sport Trust (YST) and circulated to its network of 450 School Games Organisers and the 8,000+ schools engaged in the programme to date. These summaries provide clear evidence of the impact of *SPEAR's* research in programme improvement and investment which, specifically, has led to improvements in:

- **Leadership opportunities:** YST advice to schools to create an internal delivery team including young people (17: 2012); YST developed a leadership pathway from years 5/6-13, "providing opportunities to lead and volunteer on healthy active lifestyles within and beyond Change4Life Sport Clubs" (17: 2013); £575,000 was invested, via County Sport Partnerships, to deliver coaching bursaries and courses to offer new leadership opportunities to young people (17: 2011).
- **Participation pathways:** the £575,000 County Sport Partnerships investment also created pathways to "help young people participating in school-based Change4Life Clubs take the next step into community club sport participation" (17: 2011); development of secondary Change4Life Clubs has been integrated into sport national governing body whole sport plans (17: 2013).
- **Targeting less active:** YST developed guidance on defining less active young people and directed SGOs and schools to prioritise targeting less active young people (17: 2011), and this clearer targeting advice in the first year of the primary programme resulted in an 85% recruitment rate of the less active (17: 2012).
- **Enhancing processes:** YST re-wrote training packages to focus on the key processes shown by the *SPEAR* research to enhance physical activity outcomes (17: 2013); YST re-wrote resources to present the club as a 24 week rather than a 12 week initiative because attitude changes that sustain physical activity changes had been shown to take longer to develop (17: 2012; 2013).

LloydsTSB have noted that "through annual *SPEAR* research we also understand the impact that [NSSW] is having on young people, parents and teachers which enables us to refresh the programme for the following year, as required" (18). Two major programme improvements have

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been, firstly, an increased focus on the recruitment and retention of schools in the programme each year, including the use of *SPEAR*'s findings demonstrating positive impacts on schools and pupils in press releases (8), direct communications to schools (19) and on the NSSW website to highlight to schools the benefits of taking part. Secondly, following *SPEAR* recommendations relating to the positive impact of novelty on less active pupils in 2010, the "try something new" programme theme, which was due to be changed after 2010, was retained as part of the programme for 2011 and 2012 (19).

(d) Impacts on young people's engagement and physical activity levels (end users)

There is emerging evidence that the changes above, and particularly the programme improvements outlined in (c), are impacting positively upon the young people themselves. Improvements in programme targeting appear to have followed from YST guidance and advice developed based on *SPEAR*'s findings in 2011, with the result that the clubs reached a further 125,000 of the least active young people in 2012 and 2013 (17: 2013), representing a doubling of the proportion of less active young people joining clubs. Similarly, the £575,000 investment in the County Sport Partnership activity, developed following *SPEAR*'s recommendations on leadership opportunities and participation pathways in 2011, has led to a further 8,000 young leaders being trained and an additional 787 community clubs now linking to schools (3).

Following enhanced recruitment and retention activity developed as a result of *SPEAR*'s recommendations in 2010 and 2011 that an increased emphasis was needed on retaining schools in the NSSW programme, 9,079 schools were retained in 2012 (2), an increase in the proportion of retained schools from 55% to 79%, an increase which represents over 1 million additional pupils who benefitted from successive years participation in the programme.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- (5) Speech by Jane Ellison MP, Minister for Public Health (7/11/13) http://www.ukactive.com/downloads/managed/Jane_Ellison_MP_Parliamentary_Under-Secretary_of_State_for_Public_Health_ukactive_Summit.pdf
- (6) Speech by Anne Soubry MP, Minister for Public Health (22/11/12) <http://www.ukactive.com/events/past-events/the-summit-2012/speeches/more/7890/page/1/ukactive-summit-anna-soubry-mp-keynote-speech>
- (7) House of Commons Select Committee on School Sport (July 2013) <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmeduc/164/164vw.pdf>
- (8) LloydsTSB press release (June 2013) <http://www.efds.co.uk/assets/0000/6998/OO205.pdf>
- (9) LloydsTSB Public Health Responsibility Deal pledge (2012) <https://responsibilitydeal.dh.gov.uk/pi-12-lloyds-banking-group/>
- (10) UNESCO (2102) Empowering Girls and Women Through Physical Education and Sport <http://unesco.atlasproject.eu/unesco/details/en/details.html?hl=a%20sharper%20focus&ci=d0b9ae61-6747-4d45-a0e7-1dd81f28f6ee>
- (11) Canadian Sport for Life (2012) Actively Engaging Women & Girls <http://canadiansportforlife.ca/sites/default/files/flipbooks/women/WomenandGirls/assets/basic-html/page1.html>
- (12) Saskatchewan PRA (2012) Physical Activity Recreation Engagement Strategy <http://www.spra.sk.ca/resources-and-advocacy/advocacy/physical-activity/pares-framework>
- (13) DCMS (2012) Creating a Sporting Habit for Life <http://www.sportengland.org/media/130949/DCMS-Creating-a-sporting-habit-for-life-1-.pdf>
- (14) DfE (June 2013) Evidence on Physical Education and Sport in Schools https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/226505/Evidence_on_physical_education_and_sport_in_schools.pdf
- (15) SRA (2012) Game of Life: How Sport can help make us Healthier, Happier and Richer https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/226505/Evidence_on_physical_education_and_sport_in_schools.pdf
- (16) Four Communication (2012) <http://www.fourcommunications.com/sponsorship/case-studies/lloyds-tsb-national-school-sport-week/>
- (17) YST (2011, 2012, July 2013) Celebrating Success: Change4Life Clubs Evaluation Summaries. <http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/Research/Centres/SPEAR/ResearchProjects/PhysicalEducation/Change4Life.aspx>
- (18) Research Live (2012) How research is driving LloydsTSB's London 2012 sponsorship. <http://www.research-live.com/4007926.article>
- (19) School Planning Guide (2011) http://www.gvtssp.org/images/LTSB_SchoolPlanningGuide.pdf