



Using sport and physical activity to intentionally bring about positive change for individuals and communities

Active East session at the Emirates Arena

Changing lives through sport and physical activity

Evidence shows that being active brings about positive changes beyond participation and can impact positively on the health and wellbeing of individuals, on their skills and learning, and on communities, ensuring a more inclusive and healthier nation. As well as identifying these potential benefits, this information sheet also highlights some of the ways in which sporting and non-sporting organisations can proactively use sport & physical activity as a tool to achieve both increased participation and wider social outcomes.

The power of sport and physical activity

Being physically active has the potential to bring about positive, often interrelated changes, and can be outlined across 4 key areas:

Inclusion

- › Reducing inequalities by creating opportunities which ensure that everyone can take part in sport and physical activity
- › Involving people who may not traditionally get involved, or are underrepresented in sport or physical activity
- › Building relationships between individuals

Health & Wellbeing

- › People enjoy better physical and mental health
- › People better engage in positive and healthier behaviours and choices
- › People recover from illness more effectively
- › People are more happy and confident

Skills

- › People better develop their skills for life, learning and work
- › People who are young have improved learning experiences and attainment at school
- › People are more able to progress into learning, training, volunteering or employment
- › People can make positive choices in their lives

Communities

- › People in communities feel more safe
- › People in communities are better connected and more socially cohesive
- › People in communities have improved family relationships
- › People in communities engage positively with their environment

What works?

Whilst participation in sport and physical activity can bring about change, it doesn't happen automatically for everyone. Through work in this area, the evidence tells us that there are certain key factors that make positive change through sport and physical activity more likely. These are:

Having a clear intention to bring about change

Change is most likely to happen when you have a clear focus on what change you are seeking to deliver, who will experience the change and how you will know if it has happened. Getting buy-in and support for this change across your organisation will also help.

Understanding community and individual need

Gaining a better understanding of the needs of your wider community and the individuals you are working with will help you to identify target groups and develop appropriate services and activities for them.

Removing the barriers to participation

It sounds obvious, but benefits can only be experienced by people if they participate. By thinking about who is and isn't participating in your services, and what the barriers might be for those who aren't, you can start to think about how you might need to change your offer to make it accessible to a wider range of people.

What stops people getting active?

Barriers to participating in sport and physical activity can be complex and varied and can include time, money, location of activity, access to transport, confidence and negative experience of sport in the past. Considering these barriers, and how they might be stopping some of your community participating, will help you to develop services and activities that attract the widest range of people, including those traditionally least likely to participate.

Adopting appropriate person-centred approaches and delivering them consistently

Person-centred approaches, such as youth work and community development approaches, focus on the needs, skills and aspirations of individuals and communities. By building on sports development and person centred approaches, you can create services and activities which meet the needs of your community and your target groups. Change for individuals and communities doesn't always happen overnight and requires long term, sustainable and regular commitment and support.

Having valued, committed and inspirational staff and volunteers

Your staff and volunteers are most likely your biggest resource. Engaging people from the particular community you are working in as staff and volunteers can provide you with relatable, knowledgeable role models. Ensure they are well supported and that they understand and are committed to what you are trying to change. Help them to develop a range of appropriate skills including person-centred and sports development approaches.

Working in partnership with others

No one organisation has the ability to make the changes we need in our communities on their own. Finding like-minded organisation, or groups in your local community that you can work with, can help you to make a bigger impact on the people you want to work with. Think about who else might be working with your target groups in your community and remember to think beyond other sporting organisations.

Get involved

If you deliver sport or physical activity as part of what you do, and you are interested in finding out about how you can get more people active within your community, and support wider positive changes for them, here are some resources that might help you:

- › <http://www.actify.org.uk>
- › <http://www.sportscotland.org.uk>