



Executive Summary 2



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The Fit for Girls programme, launched in 2008, is a joint initiative between the Youth Sport Trust and sportscotland, aimed at increasing physical activity participation among girls aged 11 to 16 years.

Delivered to all secondary schools across Scotland over a 3-year roll-out period, the core focus of the programme is to bring about sustainable change in schools that builds a positive future for girls' participation in physical activity.

This is achieved through providing an interactive workshop for practitioners to allow them to share and exchange necessary knowledge, tools and skills to be able to successfully consult, plan and implement positive physical education (PE) experiences and sustainable physical activity programmes for girls in the school setting, and build stronger links with community provision.

By the end of September 2010, 327 of the 372 mainstream secondary schools and 13 of the 27 Additional Support Needs (ASN) secondary schools were engaged in the Fit for Girls programme.

A national evaluation of the programme is being conducted by the Child and Adolescent Health Research Unit (CAHRU) at the University of Edinburgh.

A mixed method approach is used and findings here are from questionnaires to gather baseline findings from Physical Education staff and Active Schools Coordinators and group discussions with girls.

The overall aim of the evaluation is to assess the impact of the Fit for Girls programme on levels of participation in PE, physical activity and sport among secondary school girls.

Overall, responses were received from 297 of the 372 mainstream schools and 12 of the 27 ASN schools across Scotland, giving total school response rates of 80% for mainstream schools and 44% for ASN schools.

Key findings from the PE/Active Schools questionnaire are highlighted below:

- The majority of PE and Active Schools staff reported that less than 30% of girls in their school took part in extra-curricular activities on a regular basis.

44% of PE staff said their Fit for Girls programme was included in their school development plan.

40% of PE staff said their school development plan explicitly identifies promoting physical activity amongst girls as a priority.

- Around a quarter of schools achieved the target for 2 hours of PE a week for S1 and S2 pupils.
- PE and ASC's reported the most common perceived barrier to girls' participation was lack of interest.

69% of PE staff and 73% of Active Schools staff who attended Fit for Girls training reported that involvement in the programme had helped them to increase girls participation in PE, sport and physical activity.

- A wide range of girls-only activities were reported as being already available within the schools. Some of these may have started as a result of Fit for Girls while others may already have been in place. Dance was the most common girls-only activity within PE and football was the most common girls-only activity within extra-curricular provision.

The majority of PE (84%) and Active Schools (68%) staff said they had consulted girls about the type of activities they would like to do at school.

- 65% of PE staff and 59% of Active Schools staff said that their school had started new girls-only clubs as a result of being part of the Fit for Girls programme. The majority of these were extra-curricular activities.



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Perceptions of competence

Specific findings from focus group discussions with low active girls:

In addition to perceived lack of skill, focus groups highlighted issues with perceptions of competence as a major barrier to participation and enjoyment in PE.

Preliminary findings suggest the PE environment is central to understanding girls' disengagement in PE with the key themes centred around **3 areas**:

"It's like if you're against people who were doing it outside school... you feel even more embarrassed cos you're so bad at it compared to them."

Peer relationships	The PE teacher	Choice of activity
<p>The peer context within which PE is delivered is an important issue in terms of girls' participation. In general, single sex classes were preferred.</p> <p><i>"They (boys) shout at you and it just makes you feel really embarrassed."</i></p> <p>Being with friends is a key reason for girls' increased enjoyment and participation in the PE.</p> <p><i>"I take part more because I'm with my friends, but when I'm not with anyone I know I don't like it."</i></p> <p>However peer groups can dominate an activity and therefore exclude other girls from participating.</p>	<p>The PE teachers' personality and the relationship they have with girls is very important, rather than their gender per se:</p> <p><i>"if you didn't win or that he has a laugh or that with you... he makes sure you're not nervous."</i></p> <p><i>"In first year I didn't do PE at all because of Miss X... but in third year that's kind of changed, and that's cos I've got my own choice now."</i></p>	<p>The survey showed 75% of girls would like a wider variety of activity in PE. Focus groups revealed that choice enabled girls to participate in an activity with which they felt comfortable. Girls often favour dance and other fitness-based after school activities. The teacher and group were significant deciding factors.</p> <p><i>"If there was a decent dance class with decent people I think I'd like to join that."</i></p> <p>Girls thought that PE could be made better by the composition of the class, consultation about activity choice and how an activity is delivered. Many girls mentioned running as an activity they disliked with being 'watched' often a barrier rather than the running itself.</p>

A positive PE environment is central to girls' participation and enjoyment. There is evidence of positive changes in girls' experiences and engagement in physical activity in the case study schools.



Girls participation in PE and physical activity are likely to increase if girls...

Have a positive PE environment	✓
Have a choice of activity	✓
Do the activity with friends	✓
Have access to single sex activities	✓

Limitations of staff, timetabling and facilities in schools can be a barrier to making changes to PE provision.



If you would like to view the full report, please visit www.sportscotland.org.uk/ffg-report or for further information please contact:

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