



LEGACY 2014 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FUND PROGRAMME EVALUATION



SUMMARY REPORT

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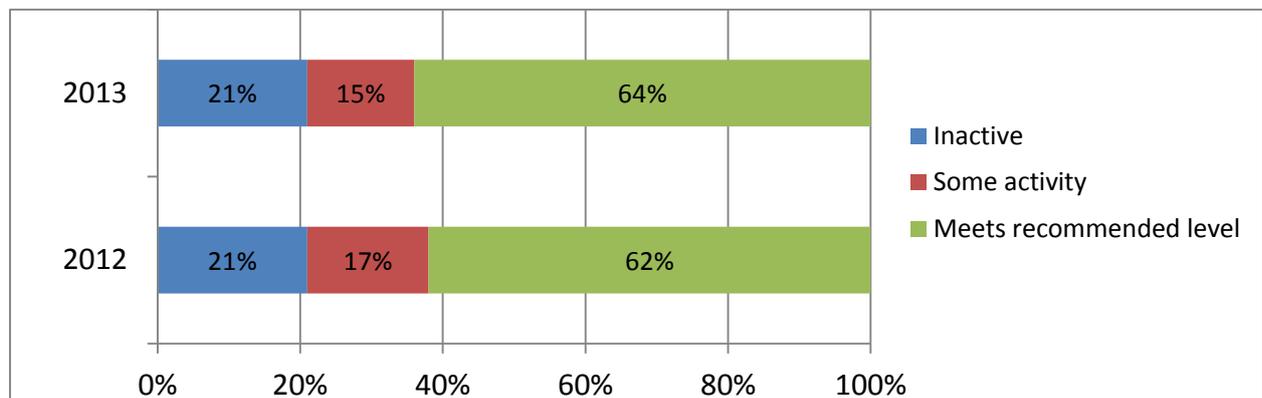
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SUMMARY

The Legacy 2014 Physical Activity Fund (the Fund) was created by Scottish Government and managed by Spirit of 2012 to deliver a 12 month programme with the aim to help get people currently inactive in Scotland to become more physically active, and to learn how to achieve this through support for 11 existing projects that were already successfully helping to reach this goal.

Funding was provided to assist projects in developing further evidence how successful interventions were reaching out to inactive people and helping them to reach the recommended levels of physical activity that bring about significant health and wellbeing benefits. Currently, about 21% of the Scottish population is viewed as inactive, and while some success has been seen in increasing physical activity levels among those who are already active to some degree; the proportion of the population reportedly taking *no* activity persists. The programme, in part, sought to assess the feasibility of scaling up activities that might over time address this.

Adult Physical Activity Levels – Scotland, 2012-13



Projects delivering the programme were encouraged to undertake additional dimensions to what was already working, to work with the evaluation team from the University of Strathclyde to generate evidence of the impact, and to reflect on what lessons were learnt as they adapted the projects.

This report summarises and evaluates the effectiveness and impact of the projects, and on the learning that has been accumulated through the 11 projects to create a perspective of the programme funded by the Scottish Government.

Its primary goals have been to:

- assess the impact of the interventions delivered by the projects on the overall levels of physical activity amongst the participants, reflecting on the absolute and relative change which has occurred
- examine the extent to which the projects were successful in raising the levels of physical activity of those who are inactive and consider how the projects might be scaled up to extend this impact

- combine the learning from the projects on the adaptations made under the programme to identify good practice that will help create sustainable and scalable ways of extending these projects into other areas of Scotland (and beyond).

The University of Strathclyde research team worked with the 11 project teams to identify the impact of the interventions on individual participants. Each project team assisted in inviting those who engaged with the project to complete questionnaire surveys at the start and end of three months with the projects. Using this data, this report advocates a more refined definition of inactive, from that currently used by the Scottish Government. At present, anyone who does not meet the recommended levels of physical activity is deemed ‘inactive’. In this report, a four step typology is used to differentiate levels of physical activity: limited, some, moderate and active.

Group	ADULTS		YOUNG PEOPLE	
	Number of days of 30 mins moderate activity	Total of 150 mins per week of moderate activity	No of days of 60mins moderate activity	
Limited	No days	Less than	Fewer than 4 days per week	
Some	<i>either</i> No days plus <i>or</i> 1-4 days plus	Greater than Less than	4 days per week	
Moderate	1-4 days	Greater than	5 or 6 days per week	
Active (above threshold)	>4 days	Greater than	7 days per week	

The term ‘active’ is thus defined as meeting the recommended minimum levels of physical activity set by the Scottish Government, with the other three terms re-classifying ‘inactive’. In this report, we restrict the use of the term ‘inactive’ to refer to those designated as such by Scottish Government and the programme managed by Spirit of 2012; our categories of inactivity are thus ‘limited’, ‘some’ and ‘moderate’.

ACHIEVEMENTS 1 - OUTCOMES

The 11 projects each sought to reach out to engage with inactive people from a range of target groups – including those identified by Scottish Government research as most at risk of being inactive. They included older adults especially in care homes, young people especially young girls, adults with mental health issues, and communities suffering from multiple deprivations.

22% of the participants involved with the programme had limited activity levels at the start. Through engagement with the projects, nearly two thirds (63%) of those in this category increased their levels of physical activity, with 17% reaching the recommended levels.

Amongst those already active (some, moderate or active levels), nearly 50% increased their levels of activity through engagement with the projects and their own activity outside of the projects.

32% of those involved in the projects reached the recommended level of physical activity set by the Scottish Government by the end of the programme, with a further 56% undertaking some or moderate activity.

There was an increase in the number of people undertaking more regular activity at the end of the project interventions. Just under half (49%) of those whose main type of activity at the start was associated with daily activity (incidental) rather than specifically focussed on physical activity itself, now undertook more routine physical activity. 32% undertaking regular activity for fitness or exercise.

ACHIEVEMENTS 2 – REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What has been achieved by the programme in assisting getting people currently engaged in limited levels of activity to be more active?

1. The focus on individuals and their outcomes in terms of physical activity was a key element of the projects, all of whom had previously evaluated outcomes in terms of the number of participants and their own sense of satisfaction. Measuring these outcomes, both in terms of raising levels of activity and achieving the Scottish Government's recommended levels has increased awareness of the methods required obtaining robust evidence and the value of assessing change/impact at the individual scale
2. An appreciation that measurable outcomes can be assessed beyond those directly related to physical activity (including life satisfaction, confidence, mental wellbeing), and that these can add value to the merit of interventions, especially where these assist people to increase their levels of activity
3. Greater understanding of the needs of participants prior to their involvement in the interventions can assist in the delivery of the activity and in achieving outcomes
4. Identifying, reaching out and encouraging people with limited levels of activity to participate is challenging, and required regular adaptations and monitoring as to whether recruitment pathways are successfully reaching the right people
5. Careful attention is required to ensure that less active people (and other participants) are offered the appropriate 'induction' to encourage them to be involved in the interventions.
6. There is a need to support individuals to ensure that there is an alignment of their expectations with the aims and projected outcomes of the activities – working towards a shared sense of achievement and a platform for future increases in levels of physical activity.

Adopting these practices and learning from them as the projects were put into practice, across the programme has meant that constructive changes and adaptations were made to the interventions, a process of learning and change strongly encouraged by the Fund.

ACHIEVEMENTS 3 - LEARNING, ADAPTING, CHANGING

The Fund actively encouraged projects to reflect on their delivery practices and their impact during the life of the programme and based on evidence gathered make amendments to what was being planned or delivered in order to increase effectiveness. Evidence and reflections of the significance

of the adaptations were captured in change records constructed for this purpose by Evaluation Support Scotland.

The changes focused on an appreciation of the need to adapt ways of recruiting inactive people and from the target group populations. New methods of promoting the projects, of working with referrers and other professionals who already were connected with groups, and being more flexible about the time and location for making contact with potential participants were also adopted within the programme.

Process changes were adopted to provide more resources, including staff time and volunteer assistance, to get a better understanding of people within target groups, and their needs which helped to enhance the value of engagement in the activities, and the reach into target groups.

Different ways to support the gathering of evidence and data to assist in evaluation were tested and used by the projects, offering incentives to encourage survey completion, allocating additional staff resource to support participants, and changes in the data management processes to streamline reporting were all adopted, helping to increase the evidence based available to individual projects and to the programme evaluation.

ACHIEVEMENTS 4 - TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

Both the reflective practices and the willingness to adapt processes have helped to generate a sense of good practice, and an overview of what worked to achieve the higher levels of physical activity recorded in the programme.

Projects which were community or placed-based (ie drawing on participants from defined geographical areas such as community or care home) and those which were condition-based (drawn on basis of shared characteristics such as mental health) were more likely to recruit inactive people than those who used a combination.

But this success was as dependent on the nature of the relationships between the project teams with communities or condition-based groups in communicating what the activity was about to referrers or individuals.

The diversity of projects indicated that some activities are more successful in increasing levels of physical activity for some groups, but have less impact on others:

- Socialising exercise, with a focus on meeting people and introducing low levels of activity, may be attractive in some circumstances - for example in care homes with elderly people – to achieve some activity but they are unlikely to raise activity to the recommended levels
- Gentle exercises may attract more people undertaking limited physical activity than socialising activities, but they do not greatly increase levels of activity
- Walking or equivalent is unlikely to attract people with limited activity levels - most walkers are already engaged in some or moderate activity - but walking can be a platform to encourage people to undertaken more activity towards the recommended levels
- More vigorous activity is likely to attract a mixed set of participants ranging from those already active at the recommended levels to those who are inactive. Through such exercise, many participants will increase their overall activity.

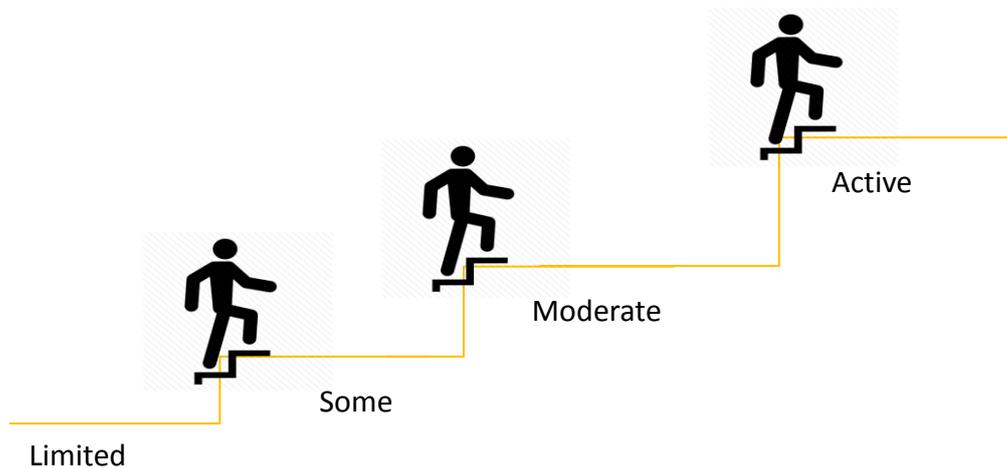
CHALLENGES AND GAPS

However, the programme has also highlighted challenges and revealed areas where evidence is insufficient or absent.

Most of the participants involved in the projects had already been undertaking some physical activity, although for most this was below the recommended level. Reaching out and including people defined as 'inactive' was challenging for all of the projects, and for some projects, the proportions of those so defined were very low.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evidence from the projects here suggests that within public policy a stronger focus needs to be given on progression towards the recommended levels, recognising the positive impact of undertaking some activity.



Recommendation 1: There is a need to define intermediate steps in reaching the ultimate objective of getting everyone in Scotland to achieve the recommended levels of physical activity.

Recommendation 2: The current dichotomy of 'active' and 'inactive' is unhelpful in encouraging those to undertake limited activity to get started to become active AND to those already engaged in some, moderate activity.

However, whilst small steps may be of importance and should be acknowledged as such, they are only significant if followed by another small step.

Recommendation 3: Develop a progressive model that nudges and supports inactive individuals toward more activity, and more independent activity – whatever their starting point.

There remains a significant gap between the practices adopted by project teams and the requirement sought by funders for robust evidence of change across participants.

Recommendation 4: more planning of resource requirements and methods to support evaluation is required prior to the start of projects to enable the generation of robust evidence.

Physically inactive people are 'hard to reach'. They are more likely to be socially isolated. They are unlikely to have connections with existing networks based on physical activity or to have links with locations where such activity takes place. Knowing their needs and aspirations is important.

Recommendation 5: Identify and work with individuals at their individually appropriate activity level, responding to the activities that interest and motivate them

Understanding the barriers to and motivations for undertaking physical activity also needs to shift away from group analysis towards a more individual basis if it is to provide the insights required now and in the future to help support projects, funders and policy makers to made inroads into this stubbornly large group in Scotland.

Recommendation 6: more research needs to be undertaken amongst those least active to identify the initial ways in which they might engage with projects and activities that are based on physical activity.