



Evaluation of the 'Girls on the Move' Programme: Summary Report

A Report to the Robertson Trust and
the Scottish Government

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Introduction

This report presents a summary of the findings from the evaluation of the 'Girls on the Move' Programme from March 2005 through to June 2008. The Programme was designed to increase the physical activity levels of girls and young women in Scotland by addressing the barriers that prevent them from participating in physical activity. The Programme was initiated and funded by The Robertson Trust and the Scottish Government (£450,000 over three years) and has been supported and delivered by Youth Scotland, the Scottish Sports Association (SSA), Sports Leaders UK and NHS Health Scotland.



Girls' Physical Activity in Scotland

The Programme was established, in part, in response to the evidence on girls' participation in physical activity as shown in the physical activity strategy document *Let's Make Scotland More Active* (Scottish Executive, 2003). The Scottish Health Survey data showed "an alarming level of inactivity among children and young people" (p39), particularly girls.



Figure 1 shows the drop in participation is most obvious in girls between the ages 10-11 and 14-15.

Source: Scottish Health Survey 1998

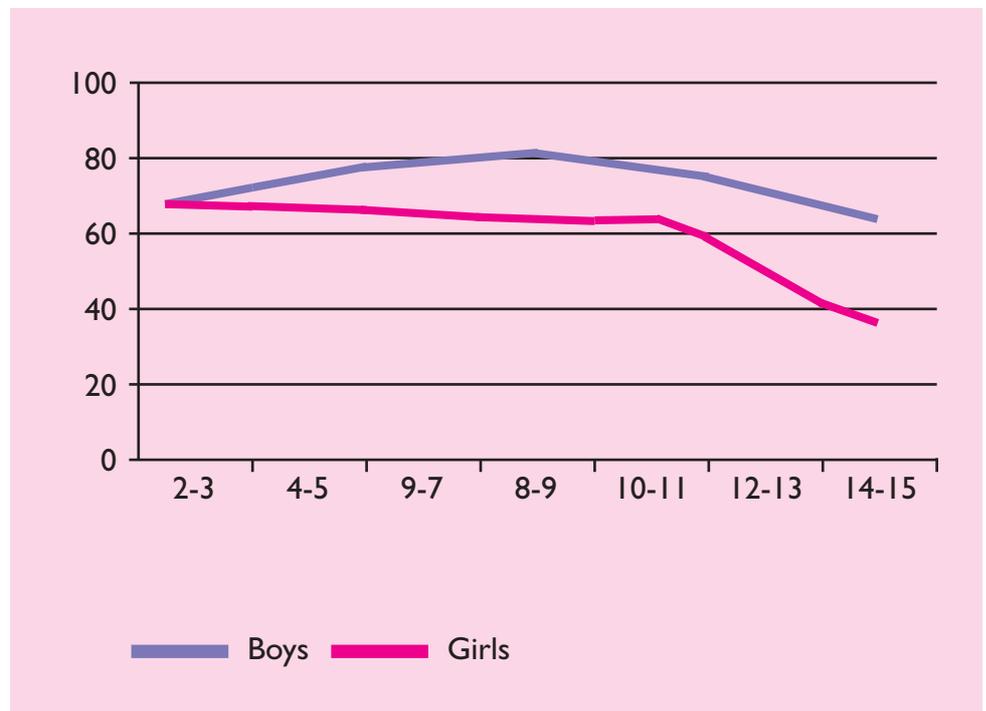


Figure 1: Percentage of Children and Young People reaching the recommended level of physical activity

Girls on the Move Programme

The Programme aims to give girls and young women that are inactive, the opportunities and choices to achieve social, psychological and physical benefits through physical activity.

The objectives of the Programme are:

- To improve the physical activity levels of girls and young women participating in the programme.
- To engage harder to reach groups in physical activities, including girls displaying “at risk” behaviour, girls with disabilities or mental health issues, young mothers and girls from ethnic minorities.
- To involve more young women as leaders in physical activities for girls.

These objectives were to be achieved through two strands: (i) **Participation Programme**, which provides grants to community groups to allow them to deliver physical activities requested by girls aged 11-18, and (ii) **Leadership Programme** which provides opportunities for young women aged 16-25 to attend 4/5 day leadership courses providing nationally recognised leadership certificates.



Programme Logic Model and Findings

Figure 2 presents a logic model for the Programme and shows the relationship between the activities delivered and the anticipated outcomes. The key stakeholders expressed a desire for a range of different outcomes including girls enjoying the activity, increasing their levels of physical activity, improving their health and well-being, through to a desire that some girls have life-changing experiences.

Evidence of the progress towards achieving the various outcomes shown in the logic model is presented in this report. To help match the findings in this report with the logic model, the following symbol and an identification number will be used -  5.

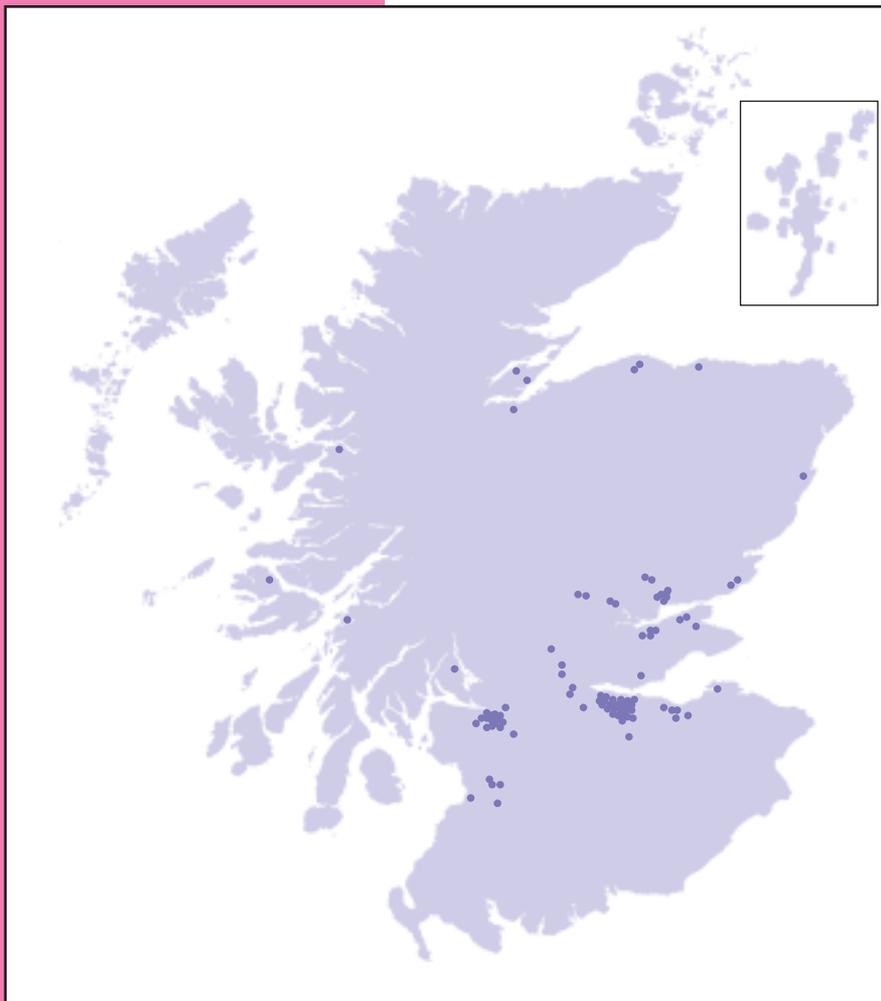
The Evaluation

The evaluation, which was undertaken by the Department of Sports Studies at the University of Stirling, used both quantitative research methods (e.g. surveys, attendance sheets) and qualitative research methods (e.g. observation, interviews, groups discussions) to assess the progress and impact of the Participation and Leadership Programmes.

The Participation Programme

In total, 88 community groups with charitable status (e.g. youth clubs/groups, community centres, leisure trusts) received £206,000 of funding through the Participation Programme. Figure 3 shows the distribution of these projects across Scotland. **i 1**

Figure 3: Distribution of 'Girls on the Move' Participation Programme funded projects



A high proportion of the projects were based in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and they also included projects in several small towns and rural communities across Scotland.

The Projects

Almost one-half of the girls indicated that they had been involved in the planning of the activities. **i 2**

The projects included a diverse range of activities, with individual lifestyle activities the most requested by girls at the planning stages. Dance was the most common type of activity with outdoor activities (inc. skiing, horse-riding, climbing, canoeing) also popular. Traditional sports, particularly team sports, were less popular with the girls with few projects including sports such as basketball, football, hockey or netball. **i 3**

From the activities provided, it is clear that a broad range of activities appeal to girls and that no single activity will cater for all girls' needs.

In their applications for funding, the project organisers expressed a desire for their projects to achieve the range of outcomes highlighted in the logic model (see Figure 2).



Attendance

It is estimated that around 1,800 girls took part in activities provided through the Participation Programme – a mean average of 20 girls per project. Around one-half (53%) of girls had high attendance rates and were involved at the beginning of their project and were still involved at the end. One-quarter (25%) of girls had low attendance at projects (attending less than one in four sessions), with some girls attending on only one session before dropping out.

Attendance at individual projects varied substantially. Based on the possible throughput at projects (i.e. the number of sessions delivered x the number of places available at each session), 65 per cent of all places were filled. Some projects filled more places than originally planned, due to an increased number of girls attending or more sessions being delivered than planned. However, one project managed to fill only 20 per cent of the places available due to difficulties recruiting girls.

Project Costs

The mean average award to projects was £2,600, although in Years 1 and 2 the average was £2,800 (when the maximum award was £5,000) and in Year 3 the average award was £1,500 (when the maximum award was £2,000).

The average subsidy per girl taking part was £129, while the subsidy per session was £14.16. However, due to the reduction in maximum award in Year 3, the average cost per girl taking part was lower (£84 per girl and £8.49 per session). 

Although the costs per girl were lower in Year 3 compared to Years 1 and 2, the scale of projects was smaller with fewer sessions delivered (14 sessions compared

to 19 sessions) and had fewer girls attending (17 girls compared to 20).

Despite the reduction in scale of projects, the adoption of the lower maximum award (£2,000) is a more cost effective way of reaching girls. It is estimated that adopting the lower award, the Programme has the potential to increase the number of girls involved by up to 63 per cent.

Organisers' Assessments of Projects

Project organisers listed a range of impacts their projects had on the girls including:

- Removing barriers to trying activities.
- Increasing girls' levels of activity.
- Sustaining girls' involvement in activity.
- Increasing girls' interest and enjoyment in physical activities.
- Helping girls develop new friendships.
- Improving group cohesion.
- Increasing girls' interest and enjoyment in physical activities.
- Helping girls develop new friendships.
- Improving skills.
- Increasing girls' confidence and self-esteem.
- Girls becoming more punctual and committed.
- Improving discipline and respect.
- Improving girls' communication skills.

The organisers were generally very pleased with the impact of the projects. They rated their projects an average of 8 out of 10 in terms of achieving what they set out to achieve.

Most of the organisers' assessments are based on their observations and on anecdotal stories. Very little formal evaluation of the impacts of the projects was undertaken by groups. This lack of evaluation is not uncommon in these types of community projects, often due



to the lack of resources (time and money) or expertise to undertake such work. However, the evaluation of the Programme found some evidence to support the assessment of the organisers.

The Impact of the Participation Programme on Girls

The evaluation sought information on the impact of projects on girls and the community groups providing the activities.

Remove Barriers to Participation

It is clear that the funding allowed groups to provide activities that otherwise would not have taken place. Some groups had never provided physical activities to girls and the Programme funding allowed this to happen. **i 4**

In addition, the projects managed to provide girls with experiences of new activities – 39 per cent had never taken part in the activity before.

At the end of projects, 12 per cent of organisers indicated that they would 'definitely' be able to continue the activity, although 54 per cent indicated it was only a possibility and 34 per cent indicated it would not be possible to continue. **i 4**

Follow-up interviews with organisers suggested that the Programme has had some longer-term impact. Some have managed to keep the activity going (sometimes with funding from other sources) and there was a common view that the 'Girls on the Move' has removed barriers that previously prevented groups from offering activity to girls.

No Boys Allowed

The absence of boys in the activity was important to many girls' involvement. The competitive nature of boys put many girls off taking part in mixed activities and the 'girls only' nature of the Programme was fundamental in attracting many to the activity.

Reaching Target Groups

The Programme has managed to reach girls from target groups where participation in activity is known to be low. Awards were provided to groups catering for the needs of girls from ethnic minority groups, young mums and girls with disabilities.

In Year 3, 13 per cent of girls were from ethnic minority groups and four per cent of participants were young mums.

Over the three years, 14 per cent of girls indicated that they had an illness or a disability that prevented them from taking part in activity at least some of the time – asthma being the most common ailment. However, for some, these were temporary conditions (e.g. sore knee, stomach ache). **i 5**

Increasing Girls' Levels of Activity

This can be interpreted in two ways (i) increasing the frequency of participation, and (ii) increasing the intensity of activity.

(i) Increasing frequency of participation

i 6

The evidence suggests that girls' frequency of participation increased. By the end of the project, 62 per cent of girls indicated that they were more active at the end of the project than they were at the beginning.



In Year 3, the surveys of girls at the beginning and end of the projects showed that participation in free-time activity on 3 or more occasions in the last seven days increased from 58 per cent to 69 per cent. In addition, the proportion of girls not taking part in any free-time activity in the seven days prior to the surveys declined by around one-half (from 13% to 7%).

(ii) Intensity of activity **i 7**

Studies using accelerometers to record levels of activity at two dance projects showed that the level of activity at which many of the girls take part is not at an intensity considered to provide health benefits. Girls were getting on average only 9-11 minutes of moderate/vigorous level activity during the dance sessions – approximately one-sixth of the daily recommended amount (60 minutes per day). Some girls received up to 20 minutes per session, but there were those that received as little as 1-4 minutes of moderate vigorous level activity.

Despite the low levels of moderate/vigorous level activity, the girls were involved in around 26-28 minutes of light-intensity activity. This level activity still has some positive health benefits. For example, intensity at this level burns calories. Also, while being involved in light-intensity activity it is unlikely that participants will be involved in unhealthy activities like snacking, which is strongly associated with sedentary behaviour.

Intensity of activity is not the only measure of physical fitness; activities can promote the development of other aspects of physical fitness, including developing flexibility, strength, core stability, body composition and improve

physical co-ordination. However, more work is needed to understand whether the girls improved these aspects of physical fitness through the Programme activities.

Enjoyment of Physical Activity

Although at the beginning a high proportion of girls indicated that they liked taking part in physical activity 'a lot' (65%) or 'a little' (27%), the proportion of respondents indicating they enjoyed taking part in the activity at the end was higher still ('a lot' 89%; 'a little' 10%). For those that completed questionnaires at the beginning and the end, the findings suggest that they increased their level of enjoyment, satisfying one of the desired outcomes of the Programme. **i 8**

Friendships

Social relationships were very important to the girls – 82 per cent indicated that they were taking part with friends, and by the end of the project 79 per cent indicated that they had made new friends while at the project. **i 9**

Physical Self Description

Measures of girls' physical self description have increased between the beginning and end of the projects. Using measures of self-esteem, global physical self, action, and flexibility¹, the evidence suggests that the girls perception of their physical self, and their worth (self-esteem) improved. However, it is not possible say to what extent the 'Girls on the Move' activity was responsible for this – many other things will have influenced the girls' development during the course of the project (e.g. school, family life, and other social environments). However, the findings correlate with the positive attitudes the girls expressed about being involved with the Programme. **i 10**

¹These measures were adapted from the PSDQ-S questionnaire devised by the SELF Research Centre at the University of Western Sydney



Desire to take part more

A high proportion of the girls indicated that they would like to continue doing the activities they had taken part in (75% yes, definitely; 21% yes, maybe), with very few stating that they did not want to continue with the activity (4%).

Furthermore, girls indicated a desire to take part in a range of other activities, the most popular being: gymnastics/trampoline (72%), swimming (53%) and dance (51%). **i 11**

It is important to note that two out of five girls dropped out of the projects and did not complete an end of project questionnaire. Consequently, it is not known what the demand for activities is from this group of girls.

Groups' Ability to Deliver More Physical Activities

Being involved in the Programme appears to have had a positive impact on many groups. Almost one-half (48%) of clubs/groups indicated that the number of girls taking part in activity had increased. Furthermore, 41 per cent of groups indicated that the number of new girls attending their group had increased, although 9% indicated that the numbers had decreased.

The popularity of the activity among girls resulted in an increase in demand for more. Nine out of ten groups (93%) indicated that the girls had requested more of the same type of activity. However, only 11 per cent indicated that they would 'definitely' be able to continue with the activity, with 54 per cent indicating that it may be possible to continue the activity and 34 per cent indicating it would not be possible to continue. **i 12**

Fifty-four per cent of groups also experienced 'a lot of demand' from girls for other activities, one-fifth (20%) of

whom indicated that they would be able to provide this activity.

Interviews with organisers some months after the end of projects revealed that the girls' attitudes to physical activity had remained positive, with many claiming the girls were continuing activity within the group setting and on their own. Most importantly they indicated that the girls were much more willing to try new activities, suggesting girls' confidence in physical activity had been developed through the initial award. **i 13**

The organisers interviewed talked positively about the Programme and welcomed the opportunities that it provided.

Life Changing Experiences

The hope that the Programme would provide life changing experiences to some girls was expressed by one stakeholder, although others considered this ambitious. However, there were individual cases where the projects had very notable (possibly life-changing) impacts on girls and young women. **i 14**

For example, one young mother in a jogging group, who was in the initial stages nervous and embarrassed about the prospect of jogging in their local community, had enjoyed taking part so much that she had gone on to become a jog leader, encouraging others in her local community to take part.

While this is not a typical case, many organisers provided descriptions of cases where girls had demonstrated very positive changes in behaviour within group sessions or had demonstrated an aptitude for engagement in activities or community activity not previously known to the girl or the group. These anecdotal stories suggest that the projects may have a substantial contribution to the lives of some girls.

The Leadership Programme

In total, 15 leadership courses were delivered through the Leadership Programme. These courses were held in various locations (inc. Aberdeenshire, Argyle, Ayrshire, Borders, Caithness, Lothians and Stirlingshire) and attracted young women from across Scotland including the Western Isles and Orkney. These courses attracted 242 participants, of which 215 graduated with a certificate in dance or sports leadership. **i 15**

The organisers of the leadership courses (SSA and Youth Scotland) experienced difficulties in organising courses due to availability of suitable venues, attracting participants, and finding times when all those needed to deliver a course were available. Despite these problems these courses were well received by participants and have trained many young women that have gone on to deliver activities to girls in their local communities.

The young women attended the courses for a broad range of reasons, with the most common reasons being: to increase their confidence (37%), learn leadership skills (34%), obtain a qualification (19%) and increase their knowledge of sport/dance (18%). Almost all participants (97%) indicated that the course they attended met their expectations and thought that the course would be useful to them in the future. **i 16**

In both pre- and post-course surveys, four out of five acted as leaders at least once per week for a mean average of around 3.4 hours per week.

Links with the Participation Programme

Two objectives of the Girls on the Move Programme are to:

- Encourage girls on the Participation Programme that are interested in leading activities to attend leadership courses, and
- Encourage young women attending the leadership course to be involved in supporting activities through the Participation Programme.

This is intended to help sustain girls' activity in local settings beyond the funding period of the Participation Programme projects.

Around one in seven (15%) of those that attended the Leadership Programme courses had previously been involved in the Participation Programme. In addition, a number of graduates from the leadership courses have been successfully delivering activities to younger girls back in their community settings. Where links have been established between the two Programmes, the project organisers have expressed great satisfaction with the contribution of the new leaders. **i 17**

While this demonstrates there has been some success integrating the two programmes, stakeholders agree that this is an aspect of the Programme that can be improved.

In Years 1 and 2, the Participation Programme and the Leadership Programme were managed by separate organisations (The Robertson Trust and the SSA respectively), which stakeholders agreed limited opportunities for integrating the two programmes. To facilitate greater integration, both programmes are now managed by Youth Scotland. Furthermore, the appointment of a full-time 'Girls on the Move' Development Worker in April 2008 provides a good opportunity to strengthen the links still further, and there is evidence that this could be achieved.

Most of the groups (92%) that received a Participation award in Year 3 were aware of the Leadership Programme. However, 44 per cent of respondents did not know if any girls from their group were involved in the Leadership Programme. This may suggest that co-ordination of activity at these groups is not particularly strong. However, 67 per cent thought that girls at their project would be interested in taking on leadership roles. This may represent a substantial untapped source of new leaders and more could be done to attract these young women to attend leadership courses.



Programme Conclusions

The evaluation team concludes that the 'Girls on the Move' Programme addresses its main aim to provide opportunities and choices for girls to achieve social, psychological and physical benefits through engaging in physical activity. This is demonstrated by:

- Girls' involvement in designing the content of projects;
- The provision of activities specifically for girls;
- The girls' positive responses to being involved in physical activities;
- Their increase in frequency of participation in physical activities (self-reported measures);
- Girls meeting new people and making new friends;
- The indication of an increase in self-esteem and self-perception (although it is not possible to attribute this only to the Programme); and
- Their increase in frequency of participation in physical activities (self-reported measures);
- The positive testimonies of project organisers.

In addition, the Programme has had a positive impact on many groups that have received an award. This is demonstrated by:

- The stimulation of new activities at groups;
- The increase in the number of girls attending the groups' activities;

- The increase in groups' knowledge, willingness and capacity to deliver activities specifically for girls.
- The desire of project organisers to provide opportunities for girls to develop physically and emotionally.

These findings suggest a successful implementation of the Programme over three years and support the decision to continue the funding of the 'Girls on the Move' Programme from 2008 to 2011.

Some of the data collected from two projects using accelerometers raised some concerns among stakeholders about the contribution the activity is making to girls' moderate/vigorous level of activity. While this concern is understandable, it is important to recognise that many girls engaged in the projects were inactive, and it may be unreasonable to expect that they would go from being mostly inactive to engaging in sustained moderate level activity.

Also, some activities are more suited than others in promoting moderate levels of activity. For example, activities such as yoga or pilates are unlikely to have any noticeable affect on girls' levels of moderate/vigorous level activity – these are more likely to have an impact on flexibility, strength and core stability. Activities that will increase intensity of activity need to be ones that require prolonged and moderately energetic movement (e.g. aerobics, jogging, basketball).

While dance was the most common activity at projects, the stop-start nature of this type of dance (e.g. learning dance routines) will likely limit the amount of moderate level of activity girls receive.

In order to stimulate the impact of activities on girls' health related fitness, project organisers could be provided with information on the types of activities and the outcomes that can be expected from different activities. Furthermore, it may be valuable to provide organisers with the skills and tools to help them measure the impact of the activities on girls' health related fitness, such as aerobic fitness (using a 1-mile walk test, heart rate monitoring), muscular strength/ endurance using sit up/push up/sit to stand), and flexibility (using the V-sit and reach test).

Providing such material may help stimulate activities that could result in better health related fitness outcomes. However, it is important not to force the types of activity too much, as there is a risk that the introduction of activities that may be perceived to be physically more demanding, may turn off girls from participating. Consequently, it is important to maintain girls' involvement

in choosing the activities they would like, while still encouraging them to undertake the activities at a level that will bring them physical health benefits, as well as the social and psychological benefits.

Girls and Physical Inactivity in Scotland

The scale of the 'Girls on the Move' Programme is modest in relation to the scale of girls' inactivity across Scotland. Using Scottish Health Survey data for 2003 and Scottish Census data for 2001, it is estimated that around 140,000 girls aged 11-18 do not meet the recommended guidelines of 60 minutes of moderate level activity most days of the week.

If the key stakeholders wish the Programme to have an impact at a population level, the scale of the Programme may need to increase.

However, the reach of the programme could also be extended by linking with other initiatives seeking to increase girls' activity (e.g. Fit for Girls). By engaging with other initiatives it might be possible to increase throughput from the 65 per cent recorded in the first three years.



Acknowledgements

The evaluation team would like to thank all the stakeholders for taking the time to contribute to the evaluation. Special thanks are extended to the project organisers that took the time to complete and return the Toolkit materials – an often thankless task. Thanks also to the girls and young women for their input to the evaluation.

Further Information

If you require further information about the 'Girls on the Move' Programme please check out the website at:

www.girlsonthemove.org.uk

or contact:

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19 Bonnington Grove
Edinburgh EH6 4BL.
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