Providing positive experiences for young people: ideas for physical activity providers

The problem

55% of young people in England do not meet the CMO activity guidelines.

Only 51% of children and young people strongly agree they enjoy taking part in exercise and sports.

Young people from less affluent families, girls and those from some ethnically diverse communities are much less likely to be active.

Only 56% of young people in satellite clubs agreed they have a say in activities.

Key questions

Why is the project needed by young people?

Who are we targeting and what’s stopping them taking part now?

What local assets can we tap into?

How are we asking young people and communities?

How will we measure success?

The solution

Consider the resources and partners needed

Consider the people and skills needed

Tap into the motivations of the young people

Understand what a positive experience looks like for them

Findings

There is no one size fits all approach. Project design should be based on insight.

Successful projects incorporate the motivations and voices of young people at all stages.

Flexible and adaptable delivery works.

Enjoyment and activity levels are linked.

Constant communication and feedback is required.

Sustainability should be planned from the outset.

Recommendations

Start with the young people

Ensure young people feel safe, comfortable and heard

Incorporate physical activity into other interests

Understand and deliver what your young people want

Constantly reflect and re-evaluate

Connect young people outside sessions

Deploy role models that are just like them

Build trust and rapport at all levels

This learning is based on Sport England’s satellite clubs programme in collaboration with a small group of Active Partnerships.
What is a positive experience?
How this is described by young people in satellite clubs:

**The environment**
Face-to-face or virtual?

- Somewhere that’s right for the young people you’re targeting, at a convenient time and place
- A warm and friendly, safe and comforting environment
- A positive and upbeat atmosphere. Young people cite music as helping create this
- Somewhere they can socialise with others and friendships are encouraged
- A welcoming, encouraging, supportive place, free from judgement.

**The approach**
Participants, leaders, volunteers, parents and others

- Make an effort to greet them on arrival
- It's ok to not join in right away - offer the option for young people to take part and pause activity whenever they like
- Keep activities easy, accessible, inclusive and simple, cater for all abilities
- Progress young people at a pace appropriate for them
- Focus on enjoyment. Show care and use humour
- Get to know young people’s motivations for taking part and act on these – so becoming and staying active is easy and natural
- Keep delivery relaxed and informal. Not too serious, with no pressure
- Be persistent and patient with young people initially unwilling to engage. They may want to participate but don’t yet have the confidence.

**Youth voice**
Keep asking all the time, not just at the start

- Co-ownership. Listen to potential participants/parents/carers and respond to their interests and needs
- Be flexible. Respond to the young people attending and their needs and wants. Sometimes young people don’t know what they want to do, so test various options out.

**Sustainability**
Keeping young people involved

- As young people mature, their needs, wants and motivations change – keep listening!
- What are the next steps for each young person and who can help?
- Enjoyment and activity levels are linked.