

Children and Young People’s Mental Health and Physical Activity – Edge Hill University Evidence Review



Edge Hill University



SPORT ENGLAND

What do the findings mean for delivery?

The findings

Sport and physical activity have **positive effects** on the diagnosed mental health problems of children and young people.



Type of delivery

Exercise in **group environments** had a **stronger** effect on mental health when compared to one-to-one or individual exercise.



Type of exercise



Aerobic exercise was the most common, and had **moderate** effects on depression.



Aerobic plus resistance exercise was less common, but had **strong** effects on symptoms of depression.



Physical activity of moderate-to-high intensity was most effective in treating depression in adolescents.

As a result of the findings we should...



Promote diverse forms of **aerobic and resistance exercise** of at least moderate intensity, particularly in **group settings** led by appropriately qualified staff.



Support and invest in the development of an **appropriately qualified workforce**.



Deliver **group-based interventions** which should be **tailored to individual needs**.



Integrate **physical activity** into **mental health services**.



Promote long-term engagement: Develop strategies to sustain long-term engagement, and tackle inequalities, in sport and physical activity among children and young people with diagnosed mental health problems.



All **intervention messaging should be responsible** and focus on developing participants’ healthy relationship with sport and physical activity, as well as addressing their mental health needs.

* Not enough evidence on team sports or other forms of activity in the existing research, but this does not indicate they are less impactful