

Young People Transitioning from School to Community Environments

Stage 3: The effectiveness of a co-
creation approach

Sport Wales - May 2023



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Executive Summary

Introduction

In 2022-23, Sport Wales, the West Wales Participation Group and SLC and Proper Active delivered a pilot project with four schools in under-served areas of Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. The project incorporated elements of primary research, youth engagement and co-creation. It explored the question:

What motivates young people around age 13-14 (Year 9) to transition from being physically active in school programmes into regular community participation opportunities?

This Stage 3 report presents findings from a review of the effectiveness of the project process. It follows two other project reports: 1) an insight pack and 2) an EXPLORE report summarising pupil feedback, both prepared by SLC and Proper Active.

Delivery of the pilot

Local authority sports development teams liaised with schools to communicate the purpose of the pilot. Cohorts of pupils were selected who were generally those less engaged in sport and PE than their peers. In three areas, female pupils were selected. The process involved working with small pupil groups to understand what an engaging, informal, enjoyable, local physical activity experience looked like for them. This took place between in the autumn and winter terms 2022-23, using a series of workshops, both face to face and online. The process was designed as a five step journey: developing relationships, consulting and discussing, before arriving at a co-created physical activity offer to be delivered in the pupils' communities.

Proper Active took a lead role in designing content for the workshops and sessions with pupils and provided the initial facilitation and delivery of the sessions. As the process unfolded, it was intended that local authority staff would take greater responsibility for leading sessions and developing the project, using the local insight gained from pupils. This took place readily.

Effectiveness of the process

Schools were supportive of the project and found it easy to identify cohorts of pupils who might benefit from the pilot. Understandably, there were variations between schools in terms of the frequency and duration of time that pupils could be released from their timetable to participate in pilot. Delivery therefore needed to be flexible and very adaptable to school context.

Sessions that worked well and met the needs of the pupils, schools and local authorities were:

- Small sized groups of 8-10, which allowed the facilitator and pupils to get the best out of the process and the chance to properly listen to all group members;
- Encouraging of pupils to adopt and display a set of values and behaviours for the process;
- Face to face, not online;
- Regular sessions for relatively short periods of time, with breaks built in;
- Based upon topics that are relevant to pupils' lives – e.g. social media, what they do in leisure time;
- Not too 'academic' – these were generally more disengaged pupils and the sessions offer something different to usual lessons;
- Task based, that use flip charts, stickers and post-its and working in pairs/threes, encouraging participation from quieter pupils;
- Inclusive of elements of physical activity, which can be classroom based, requiring no special kit/equipment, with pupils allowed to arrive 'gym-ready' in comfortable clothes;
- Led by reinforcing to pupils that the process is being steered by them, giving ownership;
- Opportunities for pupils to speak to adults other than teachers, without teacher presence;
- Inclusive of 'perks' which motivate and are enjoyed by pupils e.g. water bottles, t-shirts, freebies, rewards for commitment;
- Clarified with schools up front. Flexible timescales and flexible content within a session is likely to be a necessity to accommodate short notice changes; and
- Resourced with a modest budget for delivery to put pupils' ideas into practice.

Local authorities are confident that other schools will want to engage in the process in future, although replicating the project is very much dependent on individual school constraints and reliant on headteacher support. As ever, sustaining the approach is also constrained by local authority workforce capacity, and assigning some additional resources to undertake this work has been beneficial in supporting an area of need.

“What was helpful, in an ideal world we’d do this a lot more, having that time to sit down with the young people and really ask them about what makes them tick and what they would like. That sort of consultation is helpful and good practice to adopt in other schools and environments, the sense of co-creation and listening to young people – it’s recognised as good practice but in reality it’s not always done that much” (Local authority representative)

Outcomes and conclusion

Pupils who 'always' feel listened to are more likely to participate more frequently in sport. This pilot has gone some way to emphasising the importance of consulting and listening - as a result, these pupils have benefited from sustained support over a six + month period, and some have re-engaged with physical activity, albeit at a very early stage. This has provided them with a chance for their voice to be heard through this pilot, and more importantly, for their voice to be

acted on. Their feedback has been insightful and relevant in helping the workforce understand how disengaged pupils feel, and what the potential solutions might be.

Importantly, all the local authorities involved in the pilot are continuing these group sessions in varying formats and some are planning their next cohort of pupils to work with, independently of the consultancy support. These local authority staff are skilled and confident in developing relationships with young people. They are also sharing the insight gained with their wider teams. Even as a small-scale project, the potential impact and ability to change the mindset and future activity levels of some young people who are disengaged, or on the cusp of becoming so, is highly valuable. Further tracking to follow up any progress and longer-term outcomes for pupils and schools has been recommended.

Strategically, the pilot has complemented rather than duplicated existing work programmes and provides a means of addressing local and national aims and policies. It has fitted in well with the sector's focus on tackling deprivation, targeting female participation and building relationships with schools and young people. For Sport Wales, it addresses several areas of strategic intent: to be person centred, to give every young person a great start, and to ensure everyone has the opportunity to be active through sport.

Section 1: Introduction - Project overview and background

The West Wales Participation Group (WWPG) consists of representatives from four local authorities: Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire and Swansea. In 2022, Sport Wales commissioned consultancy support from SLC/Proper Active to work on a two stage project with WWPG - the Year 9 Transition from School to Community Activity (TSCA) pilot. This pilot project explores the question:

What motivates young people around age 13-14 (Year 9) to transition from being physically active in school programmes into regular community participation opportunities?

Stage 1

Facilitated by Proper Active, the first stage in the pilot took place in early 2022 and involved an ideation session with local authority (LA) leads to explore their question in detail, define what they most wanted to know and understand how the findings might be used. This session included an early stage system mapping exercise to start to build a picture of young people's worlds and what influences their behaviour. A desk review was then undertaken to explore the issue of teenage dropout and the broader questions raised by West Wales LA Physical Activity Leads in the ideation session. An insight pack (April 2022) was produced which provided a basis for the following Stage 2 phase.

Stage 2

As a result of this work, LA leads wanted to build on this insight with some locally based work, incorporating elements of primary research, youth engagement and co-creation. During the summer of 2022, Proper Active prepared a plan, guided by input from LA leads, outlining a process of further support which the group took forward. The process involved working with a targeted group of young people to understand what an engaging, informal, enjoyable, local physical activity experience looked like.

The audience for Stage 2 was pupils in under-served areas, aged 13/14 (Year 9) of any gender, and generally those who were less engaged in sport and PE than their peers. The pilot initially engaged with pupils during curriculum time in order to reach pupils who did not already take part in sport and physical activity in a community setting. The pupils would be supported through a multi-stage process (Appendix A) to co-create sessions to be delivered in their area. This took place between September 2022 and April 2023.

Process Evaluation

In the summer of 2022, Sport Wales commissioned an evaluation of the pilot, which covers the period July 2022 through to April 2023. A 'participant as an observer' approach was adopted for the research. This involved the researcher being part of sessions that were organised and led by Proper Active – 'sitting in' on both online sessions and the face to face activities in schools. The observational work tracked the variations in context and delivery approaches that were emerging in different

local authorities. This was supplemented with semi-structured interviews with eight local authority representatives and Proper Active. These interviews took place between December 2022 through to end of March 2023.

The focus of this work and this report is to review what aspects of this pilot project have been most effective, what could be improved, and what could be replicated elsewhere. As the pilot is still in the delivery phase, with local authorities continuing to organise sessions for pupils, the effect of the pilot on young people has yet been seen in full. As such, assessing the impact of the pilot on pupils is not the main focus of this report, although there is an option to track the project during 2023.

The report prepared by SLC / Proper Active covers the views raised by the pupils themselves during the sessions. Their report provides important qualitative insight into the issues affecting pupils' participation and day to day lives, which builds on the evidence gained through Sport Wales' School Sport Survey. For best effect, this evaluation report should therefore be used in conjunction with the SLC and Proper Active Insight Pack¹ and Stage 2 report - *Youth Insight & Co-Creation Step 2 EXPLORE: Summary Report for Sport Wales March 2023*² (referred to hereafter as the 'EXPLORE report').

Structure of this report

The remainder of this report covers:

- Section 2: Rationale for pilot and the schools.
- Section 3: Delivering the 5 step process.
- Section 4: The effectiveness of the process.
- Section 5: Outcomes and impact for stakeholders.
- Section 6: Sustainability and next steps.

¹ SLC and Proper Active (April 2022): Young People Transitioning from School to Community Environments Stage 1: Insight Pack

² SLC and Proper Active (March 2023): Youth Insight & Co-Creation Step 2 EXPLORE: Summary Report for Sport Wales March 2023

Section 2: Rationale for pilot and the schools

Section 2 provides an overview of the schools that were involved in the pilot: their location, size and their relative level of deprivation, as indicated by the percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals (eFSM)³. Pupils' views on sport from the 2022 Sport Wales School Sport Survey (SSS)⁴ provides additional context for the intervention.

Table 1 – School statistics

Free School Meal Eligibility - % of pupils			
School	Number of pupils in school	Number of pupils in pilot	
Dyffryn Taf, Whitland, Carmarthenshire	913	18 mixed gender	
Henry Tudor School, Pembrokeshire	1228	5 female, 1 non-binary	
Llangatwg Community School, Cadoxton, NPT	769	9 female	
Dylan Thomas Community School, Cockett, Swansea	574	10 female	

The level of deprivation in the four schools varies from under a fifth of pupils eligible for FSM in Dyffryn Taf and Henry Tudor schools, to over half of pupils in Dylan Thomas Community School, which had the fourth highest level of all secondary schools in Wales during 2022.

Interventions such as this pilot are important as there is evidence to show that:

- Participation has fallen 'post'-COVID-19 among the whole pupil population. The percentage of pupils taking part in organised sport outside the curriculum three or more times a week has fallen from 48% in 2018 to 39% in 2022. The number reporting no frequent participation was 36%, up from 28% in 2018.
- A 15-percentage point difference exists between the least deprived (FSM1 schools), where 47% take part on three or more occasions a week and most deprived (FSM4), where the figure is 32%. This disparity has increased since 2018 where a 13-percentage-point difference was observed between the least and most deprived. The disparity between the least and most deprived is even more stark when considering community club participation at least once a week, with a 20-percentage-point difference observed between the least and most deprived.⁵

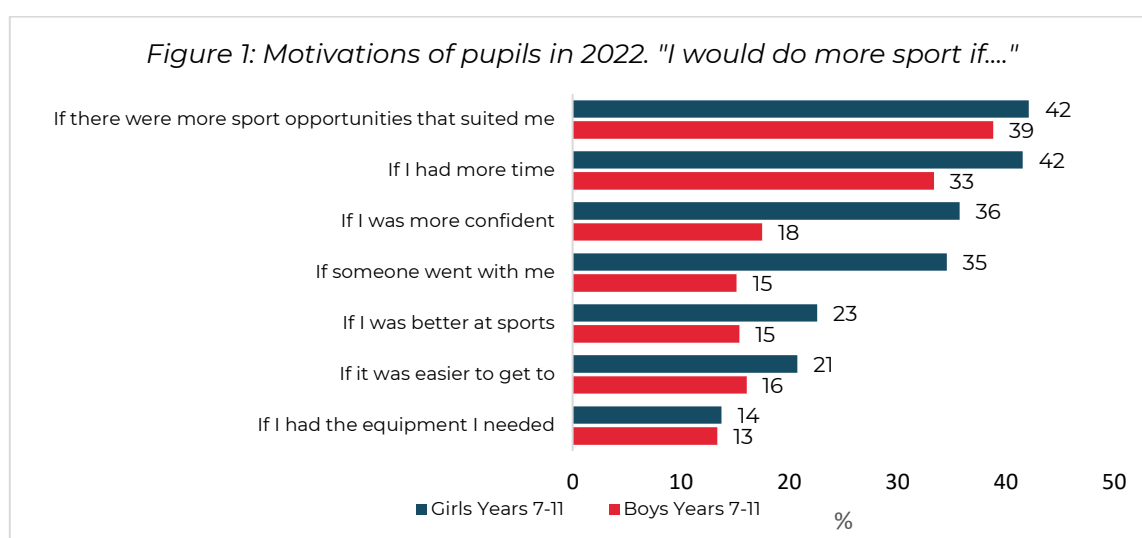
³ Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) 2022. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/schools-census-results-february-2022.html>

⁴ Sport Wales School Sport Survey 2022. Available at: <https://www.sport.wales/research-and-insight/school-sport-survey/>

⁵ Sport Wales webpage. Available at: <https://www.sport.wales/research-and-insight/school-sport-survey/everyone/>

- It has long been established that pupils start to drop out of sport and physical activity participation from early teens onwards, particularly female pupils. The latest SSS results reiterate this pattern.
- The SSS also explores attitudes to PE. In Wales, 15% of pupils say their ideas about PE are 'always' listened to. 14% of pupils in Carmarthenshire 'always' feel that their ideas about PE are listened to, 15% in Swansea and Pembrokeshire and 17% in Neath Port Talbot.
- The difference between boys and girls in Years 7-11 is striking. Across Wales, 11% of secondary school pupils 'always' feel their ideas about PE are listened to – 14% of boys compared with only 8% of girls.

Figure 1 below shows factors that would encourage secondary school pupils to do more sport.



Data from the schools and LAs participating in this pilot is reflective of the situation across Wales. The key reason affecting approximately two fifths of secondary school pupils is that there are not enough sports opportunities that suit them. The pattern is similar by gender except that girls are more likely to lack confidence and someone to do sport with.

Further emphasis on consultation with participants and non-participants is therefore an important consideration in the general delivery of sport. Traditionally, pupils who 'always' feel listened to are more likely to participate more frequently in sport and enjoy PE and sport at school⁶. These perceptions of many pupils who are not feeling listened to, lacking the time, confidence, and the opportunities that appeal to them makes it all the more important that interventions such as this pilot are explored. It is an issue recognised by those working with disengaged young people:

"...Some teachers are so confident with sport; I think they struggle to see that some girls struggle around it. They are so engrained in being comfortable"

⁶ Sport Wales School Sport Survey 2022 – Data tables and Local authority reports

about that environment they can't see the tiny, tiny changes that could be made to get more girls participating.” (LA representative)

The comment can equally apply to those in the community who are delivering sport. Local authority sports development staff frequently consult young people when planning and delivering sessions, but often those pupils and young people who are already disengaged do not have a voice in this process, and there are limited resources within the workforce to address this gap.

This TSCA pilot provides an important opportunity for such pupils to be listened to and supported over a sustained period of time. Through this pilot, pupils have had (and continue to have) the chance to put forward their views and to co-create an activity that is more likely to engage them and encourage them to get involved in physical activity and sport.

Section 3: Delivering the 5-step process

This section provides an overview of how the project steps unfolded and discusses the variations in local delivery. This is followed by a review of the effectiveness of the process and whether this differs for pupils, for schools, the LA representatives and Sport Wales.

Proper Active produced resources for all stages which were designed in partnership with LAs. Proper Active also provided information sheets for schools, parents and pupils ahead of delivery, which gave key information on the project and gained consent.

Overall, the five step process was designed as a journey for pupils and staff involved. Proper Active took a lead role in designing content and for the initial steps, taking responsibility for delivering and facilitating the early sessions. LA staff could play as large or small a role as they were comfortable with. As the process unfolded, LA staff would take greater responsibility for leading sessions. This took place readily. Proper Active's support was one of leading and delivering in the school setting at the outset – particularly for the EXPLORE session. This was followed by online delivery of THINK, and then stepping back from having direct contact with pupils to a role of mentoring, advising and guiding LA staff. By Step 5, the leadership role has transitioned from Proper Active to LAs, with LAs supporting pupils to put their co-created activity into action.

Step 1: MEET

The MEET session was not part of the original series of project steps but was instigated after LA staff suggested that it would be useful to hold a meet and greet session so pupils were not overwhelmed with new faces at the start of the process. Generally, LA staff preferred to run this session themselves, which was a logical approach with LA staff in the classroom with pupils (and teacher in some cases), and the consultants were introduced online to say hello, so their faces were familiar prior to meeting in person. The MEET session was a chance to introduce the pupils to the purpose of the project, explain roles, and allow pupils to ask questions.

Proper Active prepared a session plan which contained a brief icebreaker and introductions, and a short exercise where pupils could establish a set of values that they would adopt throughout the project⁷.

The practicalities of attending the sessions remotely (especially for facilitators) was not always smooth. At the school-end there were some technology hiccups with sound, connection and the ability to see the whole group at once. Some pupils were naturally quieter than others. Overall the set-up was workable, but it was difficult to get the most out of the session in a remote set-up. Online versus face to face delivery will be a theme returned to throughout the report.

In hindsight, introducing this extra MEET session in the whole process provided an additional opportunity to inform pupils of the purpose of the project, especially to reinforce the emphasis on pupils co-creating and owning the resulting activity. This was useful, as this was a point that perhaps pupils did not fully appreciate until far later in the process – at one CREATE some pupils appeared surprised that their activity would indeed come to fruition and was not a theory based discussion. Emphasising and reiterating this message is therefore beneficial to engaging the group.

Step 2: EXPLORE

The EXPLORE session was a 2 hour 15 minute research workshop to get to know the young people better, learn about their lives, and their perceptions and experiences of sport and physical activity. EXPLORE was designed and delivered as a face to face session in school. Proper Active and the researcher travelled to the schools for these sessions, and the sessions were led by Proper Active with support from LA officers. Teachers were briefly present at part of one session.

Where the MEET session could not take place before EXPLORE, MEET topics were covered at the start of the EXPLORE session and activity timings condensed. In one school, more students than expected arrived at the session, including 8 males, giving a total of 18. This created difficulties logistically in terms of the session plan and room set up and behaviourally, as some pupils (both boys and girls) were challenging to keep on task. Others worked well in groups but had less direct support as facilitators had to manage behaviours. Although circumstances were challenging, the session was still productive in gaining insight into pupils' lives and their relative levels of engagement and enjoyment of sport and physical activity.

In a separate LA, the school imposed boundaries on the length of time pupils could be away from other lessons and when the sessions would take place. This meant the workshop could not be delivered in the intended way. The LA officer instead undertook the EXPLORE exercises with the group over a series of single lesson timetabled PE slots, with advice and support available from Proper Active as required. In the remaining two LAs, EXPLORE was delivered as envisaged, although in a slightly shorter format due to timings of breaks and afternoon lesson programming.

⁷ These included: Teamwork, Be fair to everyone, Be honest, Confidentiality, Be kind and support/encourage each other, Be respectful and listen to each other, Everyone to get involved and share ideas, No rudeness or bad language

Pupils' feedback and the findings from this step formed the basis of the full EXPLORE report produced by SLC and Proper Active.

Step 3: THINK

The THINK session was a 1-2 hour interactive online webinar with the young people to discuss some core behavioural principles which support regular engagement in activities. This included content on the importance of language, imagery and consistent messaging. Proper Active produced a slide pack which has been shared with LAs. The format of the session included Proper Active presenting information with a series of discussion topics and exercises, including playing short fun video clips which were discussed as a group.

This step was designed and delivered as a partnership between Proper Active and LA Leads. Proper Active met with the LA leads in advance to jointly decide which content would work with their group of pupils and which content was feasible within the time allowed by the school. LA leads hosted the session in person and Proper Active facilitated the session via Microsoft TEAMS. Following the session, Proper Active produced a summary of the discussions for LAs to have as a record.

THINK was delivered by Proper Active to two of the LA groups and the remaining two LAs were provided with the content so they could run exercises in their own time when appropriate to their school circumstances and timetables.

Step 4: CREATE

This step was led solely by LAs, and Proper Active acted as a mentor and guide, taking a step back from steering the project. The premise of CREATE was to hold a design workshop where the young people are supported to create their own ideal activity, which could be entirely new, or an adapted existing offer. As this session was partly based on the discussions held previously and pupils' feedback to date, Proper Active provided a 'session ideas' document, links to useful resources and an 'ideas wall' exercise. This was used in at least two LAs, with one session observed by the researcher.

As with other steps, Proper Active offered LAs the chance to meet and discuss their session in advance so that the various exercises and their purpose could be explained, if it was not clear from the written guidance.

Step 5: IN REAL LIFE

Where possible, LA officers had incorporated physical activity opportunities as part of the more classroom-based consultation steps 1-4: either using the classroom itself, or by accompanying pupils to the school gym after sessions, or organising some games in a sports hall. LAs reported that school staff were also keen to see this happen, especially where groups were meeting during what would have been their PE sessions.

The timescales for reaching the envisaged delivery of 'in real life' sessions across the LAs varied. School based physical activity sessions in one LA began pre-

Christmas 2022 holidays, and in another LA post-holidays. After school/community based sessions started in March 2023 in the other two LAs. The practicalities of organising community based sessions outside of school time will also vary. In some schools, pupils live across a large catchment area, travelling in to school by bus. After school sessions can be constrained by bus times home. One pilot school ran a late bus, making after school provision more feasible.

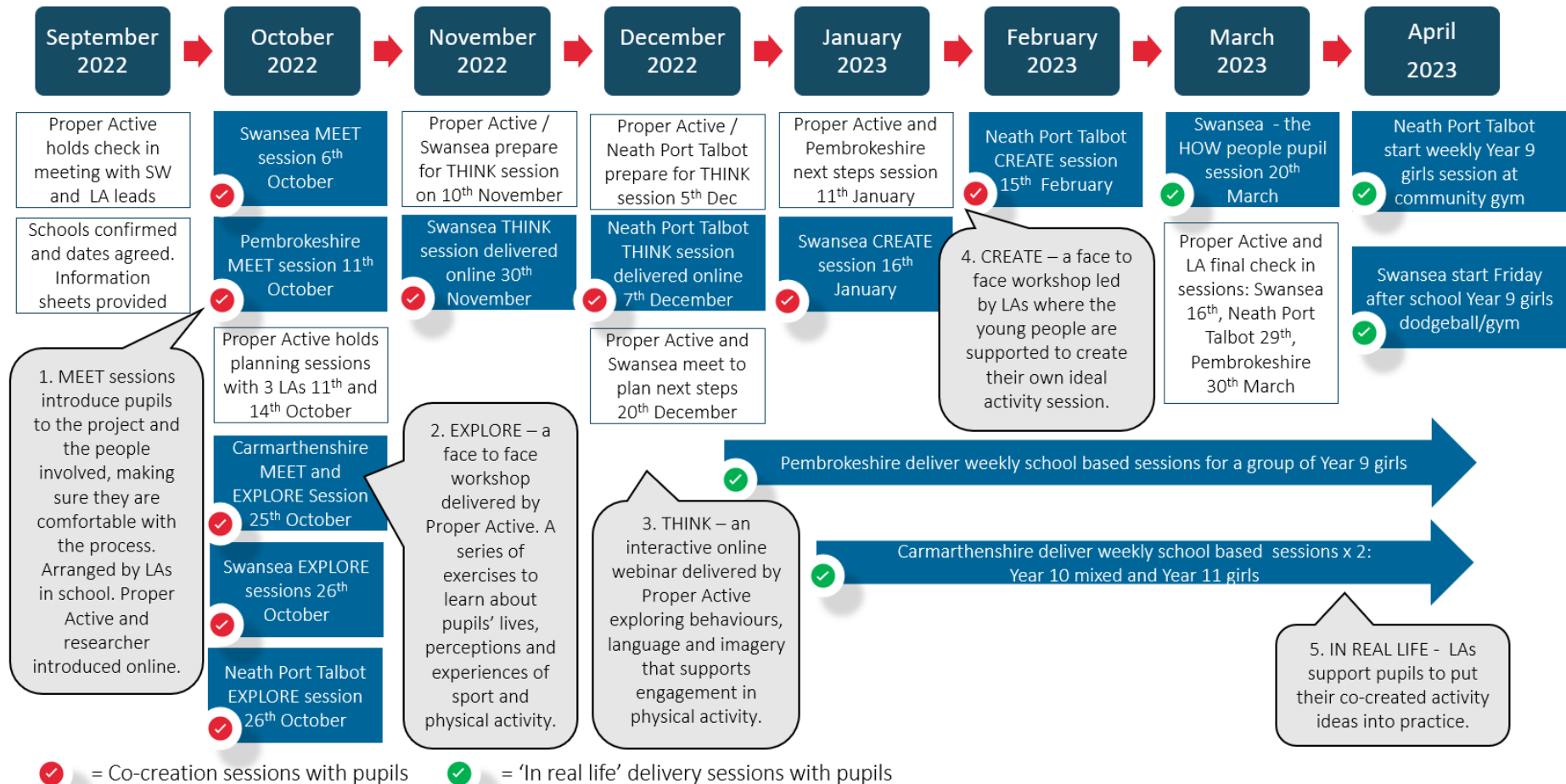
Very positively, three LAs envisaged they would continue supporting the pupils post-Easter 2023. Putting the learning gained from the earlier steps into action, one LA will be using a community hall a two minute walk from the school and have incorporated an upskilling course so that girls might lead the session in due course. Another LA has agreed with their group to start a regular session on a Friday after school, either doing dodgeball or going into the gym and will organise a coach for them to do this. The Headteacher has met the group and has agreed to provide funding if girls show commitment at the other sessions. They will have a target of arranging a day out for the group to include outdoor and adventurous activities.

Another LA has introduced their group to a new community gym managed by their leisure provider, making use of a mini bus and the school's late bus provision. Activities are subsidised by the sports development department who have liaised with the leisure provider (who are already offering bookable youth friendly sessions) to provide an exit route to the community.

It is also very positive that LAs intend to continue using this co-creation process with additional groups of pupils which will extend the reach of the co-creation approach and add to the feedback and insight gained locally. At the time of writing, one LA had another cohort of pupils to engage with in addition to the existing groups they were working with and another two LAs were looking at replicating the co-creation process in other schools.

A timeline of the process is shown below in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Timeline



Section 4: The effectiveness of the process

In this section the effectiveness of the different stages and the various challenges and enablers of the whole process are explored.

Relationships with schools

Schools have been supportive of the process at senior level and teachers have been present for parts of a handful of sessions, but have not been involved in the entire process. In some schools, the sessions are entirely led by the LA officer, and this is logical when the officer is allocated time at the school as part of their work programme. There are clearly challenges in terms the opportunity to demonstrate the facilitation process to teaching staff, which has not really emerged. As one lead commented:

“I understand it is difficult for the teachers to have the time, the sessions are quite long and quite complex...”

They posed how this could be resolved, although it was felt to be challenging:

“Whether you can find that teacher that can invest in an after-school programme with them... I think with the teacher there, they (the teacher) will have more buy-in, take more responsibility and be able to influence the outcomes of it a bit more.”

Delivery of the project needs to be flexible and very adaptable to school context. We heard that some schools are stricter than others about external visitors coming to the school and who can be in attendance on school days. Other schools had a more ‘open door’ policy and welcomed visitors. Schools have tended to allocate the PE lesson for ‘releasing’ the pupils from their usual curricular timetable. In two LAs, it was necessary to deliver the steps in one hour weekly slots. This has not necessarily hindered the process, and in one sense has allowed the LA officer to build a relationship with pupils with more regular and frequent contact. The gap, however, has been the direct face to face support of Proper Active in the co-creation journey, the advantages of which are discussed below.

On the flip side however, if the teacher present is a PE teacher, feedback from pupils suggests that them having greater involvement in the process might be off-putting because the cohorts are already disengaged from PE. It was clear from observing sessions that pupils could speak more openly to non-teaching staff about any school-based issues that prevents them from getting involved. It is important therefore that the insight from pupils is shared with teaching staff so that teachers are able to make small adjustments to delivery that may encourage more engagement – but with great care not to identify individual pupils which would compromise the trust and relationship established between pupils and LA officers during the process.

The most favourable option in terms of gaining greater teacher involvement in the process could be to include a short session in the overall plan where the teacher is present to listen to discussions (and not challenge perceptions), or for the teacher to come in for part of a session and the LA facilitator can summarise the feedback

on behalf of pupils. Both options would demonstrate to pupils that their voices are being heard and teachers could benefit from real-time feedback and first hand insight that may help them solve a problem with attendance.

There was a change of the teacher contact point within one school which caused a temporary break in the relationship between the LA and the school and challenges in making arrangements for the practical session - where large numbers of pupils unexpectedly attended the in-person EXPLORE step.

“The school was willing, but the understanding of the project might not have been fully there.” (LA lead).

Pupil engagement

Attendance in the sessions varied. Table 1 above shows the total number of pupils involved in the pilot in each LA, however group sizes varied and not all pupils attended all sessions. Variable attendance at the different sessions is reportedly due to general school absence and scheduled school trips rather than pupils choosing to drop-out of the process.

Although the pilot was not designed to target girls, all the LAs and schools decided that the group of pupils they wanted to participate were female and most did not take part regularly in PE lessons. One group were described as being very disengaged with school as a whole and did not get involved in any organised activities at school or after school. Targeting girls, and those more inclined to be disengaged also aligned with local and national policy.

The pupils observed generally appeared to enjoy the co-creation process and engaged in it. Some responded **“good”** when asked directly at the EXPLORE how they had found the session. Further evidence of their engagement has been demonstrated by their continued attendance at most of the group sessions currently being delivered by LA officers. Girls who previously sat out of and avoided PE lessons have been actively participating in the physical activity sessions organised through the pilot. All pupils who have been involved in the pilot have had the chance to stay involved, and in one LA, the process has been developed further so that the original cohort of pupils can bring a friend, giving more pupils the chance to participate in an enjoyable activity of their choice.

Consultancy support and resources

For each stage, Proper Active prepared a session guide which contained comprehensive details of envisaged attendees and their roles, room requirements and any materials such as flip chart, white board that would be useful. LAs had a chance to review the MEET, EXPLORE and THINK session guides and suggest any changes – and practical aspects such as timings were amended as a result of their feedback. The various ice breakers, exercises and tasks and suggested session structures were set out clearly. While these guides were detailed, Proper Active emphasised that this was **“not a curriculum”** but could be used flexibly, reflecting the ethos of a co-creative approach. As set out in the EXPLORE report

“it was important that this was a process, rather than simply asking the young people what activity would get them more active, to ensure both we and the young people were able to fully understand the complexity of their past experiences and what this meant for the future.”

LAs were asked which tasks used in the sessions were useful. Almost all the content delivered or shared with LAs was viewed positively. Things that resonated were the examples of positive and negative environments, the videos, discussions about places they liked and debate around social media and body consciousness.

“I do think giving them the examples encourages them to speak out.”

In some cases, some exercises had less traction with pupils and/or LA staff which included what they did at home - which tended to elicit shorter one word responses like ‘sleep’, or ‘nothing’ which needed probing. These discussions also came at the start of sessions where it may have taken a while for the pupils to feel comfortable speaking up and not yet sure of facilitators’ expectations. Having established values at the outset, this became a useful set of words for Proper Active and later on the LA officers to refer back to when probing about how to make people feel welcome at a session and not judging others.

Length of process: Generally, all parties were in agreement that it would be possible to shorten and simplify sessions, reducing the amount of content shared in one go to maintain the level of engagement with pupils:

“I think those sessions are really worthwhile, but I would probably simplify some of the content on them... I think with the nature of some of those pupils it was possibly a bit too academic for them.” (LA lead).

“They have a fairly narrow attention span” said another. In addition, reducing the gap between sessions would assist with this. In some cases sessions were spread out and there could be a few weeks before the group met again, so it was harder for pupils to remember what they had spoken about and keeping the momentum going. Some LAs have regular weekly contact with ‘their’ school and access to the pupil group but this way of working is not standard across LAs. There was a general feeling that more frequent contact would help build relationships, move pupils towards the goal more quickly, and probably assist with teacher engagement, as teachers were keen to see pupils start to do physical activity rather than classroom ‘theory’.

The consultant’s flexibility, adaptability and general availability throughout the process was very strong, going the extra mile in providing more one to one liaison and support than was envisaged at the outset. This included extra meetings to help LAs prepare for sessions, providing follow-up resources to individual LAs and offering debriefs and next steps and sustainability planning. Changes to the process to fit local requirements were accommodated wherever possible.

The resources themselves provided by Proper Active, and the introduction to a more formalised way of consulting and co-creating sessions was new to most and valued. The Sport Wales Physical Literacy Journey poster was an additional

resource used by one LA in a session with pupils as a tool to help pupils explore their changing experiences of physical activity over time and this resource was also referenced by another LA.

It is important to note the local authority resources that have been dedicated to this project at both officer and senior officer level. LAs reported how they have been updating their wider teams on progress and plan to formally share and present the resulting insight to their team. Several LA officers were familiar with working with similar cohorts of young people and some had teaching experience, youth development experience and already worked on projects that aligned with the pilot, particularly those involving disengaged young people and girls. They were competent and confident in developing relationships with the young people, a key part of their roles. There were very positive benefits when officers were locally empowered, engaged in the pilot and confident. Examples included enhancing the process through making links with other complementary areas of their work programme such as Us Girls, or arranging transport, drawing on relationships with other community providers and exploring alternative funding sources to sustain delivery.

Online versus face to face provision

Due to where consultants were based and the travel and time costs involved, some of the sessions were delivered online. This was challenging and although THINK worked relatively well online because it had more presentation and video content, online delivery was not as effective as face-to-face delivery. There were also the occasional technical and sound issues which sometimes ate into session time, and LAs had the challenge of finding a suitable room available within the school with large screen equipment. Often, the session had to be done via laptop which clearly meant those in the classroom had a poor view and those working remotely could not see the whole class and couldn't benefit from visual cues about how pupils were finding the session. Where sessions were delivered jointly with LA officers in the room, they could provide that in-person link. In one LA the school did not want to have an online session at all, and “pushed back” and insisted on face to face.

The preference all round was for face to face delivery:

“You need to be with them directly to speak to the pupils rather than put it all online - you can get them to talk then, and ask them things one by one to make sure they contribute...”

“The practical work sessions worked better - they loved the stickers, the flipchart work where they could work at the table. On Teams, couldn't get as much out of it.”

The face to face sessions were held in a variety of places within the schools and included classrooms, library, café and visits to the gym. Of the sessions observed, comfortable spaces away from noise and interruption seemed more conducive to group discussion and encouraging pupils to talk. One LA posed the option of holding CREATE-type sessions in a coffee shop or on a walk. Their previous experience had found that they could get more engagement and openness from pupils when they were out of school. Walk and talk consultation sessions have

been used in other programmes and can encourage more openness, consulting and listening in more informal ways and settings.

Sessions that worked well and met the needs of the pupils, schools and local authorities were:

- Small sized groups of 8-10, which allowed the facilitator and pupils to get the best out of the process and the chance to properly listen to all group members;
- Encouraging of pupils to adopt and display a set of values and behaviours for the process;
- Face to face, not online;
- Regular sessions for relatively short periods of time, with breaks built in;
- Based upon topics that are relevant to pupils' lives – e.g. social media, what they do in leisure time;
- Not too 'academic' – these were generally more disengaged pupils and the sessions offer something different to usual lessons;
- Task based, that use flip charts, stickers and post-its and working in pairs/threes, encouraging participation from quieter pupils;
- Inclusive of elements of physical activity, which can be classroom based, requiring no special kit/equipment, with pupils allowed to arrive 'gym-ready' in comfortable clothes;
- Led by reinforcing to pupils that the process is being steered by them, giving ownership;
- Opportunities for pupils to speak to adults other than teachers, without teacher presence;
- Inclusive of 'perks' which motivate and are enjoyed by pupils e.g. water bottles, t-shirts, freebies, rewards for commitment;
- Clarified with schools up front. Flexible timescales and flexible content within a session is likely to be a necessity to accommodate short notice changes; and
- Resourced with a modest budget for delivery to put pupils' ideas into practice.

Delivery budget

As the pilot reached the stage of operationalising the pupils' ideas in February/March 2023, it emerged that there was not a consistent way of funding activities that had costs attached. Building in a small budget for delivery, tasters sessions and potentially a reward for pupils through a visit to a more costly activity taster or away day treat would be beneficial. It would also further demonstrate to pupils the commitment to them. Sharing the amount available up front with pupils could a) help them feel valued in the process and b) a mechanism to help them develop their understanding of the financial viability of their suggestions and the practicalities of putting things into practice.

Should the pilot be extended elsewhere, allocating a very modest sum for a few weeks of delivery / transport costs to kick start activities would be beneficial.

Section 5: Outcomes and impact for stakeholders

In this section, the emerging outcomes for local authorities, schools and pupils are explored. It should be noted that at this stage in the process, school and pupil outcomes are based on secondary feedback via LA interviews and researcher observations with minimal input from school staff.

Local authorities

Centrally funded consultancy support: The first very tangible outcome has been the creation of a full set of session resources and formal documentation such as the school and pupil information sheets and session plans. All LAs reported they found the resources useful and some asked if there were more available to add to their bank of tools for working with young people. Proper Active has shared more materials as a result.

From a delivery perspective, having Proper Active facilitate the first two sessions provided an opportunity for LAs to see the process in action before taking it on individually. This offered an additional mode of learning to simply distributing and explaining the written theory and session plans. It also provided support to record session outcomes and pupil feedback comprehensively. From a research perspective, it is notoriously difficult to facilitate a session and effectively capture as much learning and nuance as possible from the sessions without recording them, which was not an option for the majority of these sessions.

Part of the consultancy role is of course to prepare reports and share the insight widely, whereas we know that resources to do this within LAs are limited. The pilot has helped address this, producing the Stage 1 insight pack and Stage 2 EXPLORE report, with LAs reporting they had valued these. Indeed, one LA commented on the EXPLORE report that they:

“...appreciate the depth of understanding generated through the work and outlined in the report to date. Whilst many of the observations and comments are unsurprising, it is of great value to have a coherent documentation of young people voice across the LAs.”

Building capacity and skills of LA staff: One of the intentions of the project for Sport Wales was that the pilot provided a CPD opportunity for operational staff in local authorities. This was recognised as a gap compared with training at a senior level, and an area that had previously been supported via lottery-funded programmes 5x60 and Dragon Sport. However, LA interviewees did not automatically perceive the project as ‘training’ in a formal sense, it was more viewed as consultancy and research support in providing local evidence. This has been beneficial in terms of LAs having access to additional capacity and skills to undertake this, and the project outputs are a means of helping LAs demonstrate outcomes and impact. Early in the process, LA leads mentioned the need to have more experience/evidence to make a case for investment in different approaches.

“Tools that we could use to structure or capture that information from young people”.

“What was helpful, in an ideal world we’d do this a lot more, having that time to sit down with the young people and really ask them about what makes them tick and what they would like. That sort of consultation is helpful and good practice to adopt in other schools and environments, the sense of co-creation and listening to young people – it’s recognised as good practice but in reality it’s not always done that much” (Local authority representative)

Positively, officers are already making use of the EXPLORE report in their ongoing work and sharing these findings with the wider team. Although the pilot has focussed on girls as this has been a target group for all the LAs and therefore a good fit for this intervention, officers discussed replicating the process in future and whether male officers would be the right person to work with groups of girls and whether either the officers or the girls would be comfortable with that process. However, working with disengaged boys was seen as just as important, and this is something LA coordinators will consider when deploying different team members in future. As a result of this process, two of the LAs have discussed developing / mentoring others in their team in the co-creation approach, benefiting from a set of ready-made resources and session outlines.

Accessing centrally funded consultancy support: The gap for two of the LAs has been the direct face to face support of Proper Active in the co-creation journey. While LAs are very comfortable delivering the process themselves, it has been a shame that some have missed out on the consultant’s expertise. There have been several advantages of having external support as observed by the researcher. For pupils, it may help them feel valued because someone has purposefully come to hear them – indeed, in one face to face session pupils were impressed that consultants had travelled some way ‘just to see us’. It can encourage a rich discussion with pupils as the consultant is able to bring in the experiences, examples and evidence from similar processes across the UK. Proper Active are also aware of what pupils in other sessions have said in response to the same exercises and can introduce this to the discussions to help pupils compare and contrast different viewpoints from different places.

New learning: LAs reported that they had gained new insight into these pupils and the reasons why they don’t engage and useful school-specific information through the process. Officers intended to try and address easily-overcome issues within their school where they could, such as covering up windows in the school gym so that boys couldn’t look in, or changing session timings for lunchtime offers. Hearing about pupils’ negative perceptions about some PE staff was a surprise to some officers in two of the LAs, as was the extent to which some pupils disliked being in school. ‘Old’ learning was also reinforced, as ‘traditional’ barriers to participation for girls re-emerged such as PE kit and dislike of changing rooms. LAs found this frustrating when actionable issues were not being addressed by schools, such as strict PE kit policies, and lack of choice and flexibility – barriers that have been highlighted for decades.

“It has been interesting to see the differences between Year 10 and 11.”

“We’ve definitely picked up new information about the school – just that thing about the gym and the times, and the fact they don’t really like being in school as well that was quite a big thing for me”

Another LA also noted the hurdle of ‘school’:

“First time we met (after EXPLORE) there were a couple of extra girls, and I did something similar to the EXPLORE session...asked them to score 0-10 their ideas on physical activity generally and physical activity in school. Generally, it was given 7s, but in school, 3s.”

One of the common interests raised by pupils in most groups was wanting to go to a gym, but not necessarily a school gym, and not having the know-how or offer of an induction that would enable them to use the equipment. In two LAs this is being addressed as part of continued delivery. There was also some “unexpected” interest as far as LAs were concerned in walking and running. Pupils had enjoyed clocking up their steps and were reporting their progress back to the LA staff and doing couch to 5K type sessions.

Schools

The benefits for schools may be greater than envisaged in the design of the project. As a result of the intervention, pupils aren’t just sitting out of lessons - they are doing something constructive and the project has been valued by Headteachers. While recognising this as a benefit, it also highlights again the training needs and support required for teaching staff so that they have the tools to meaningfully meet the challenge of providing an inclusive offer for all pupils in curriculum based sport and PE.

An unintended consequence for PE teachers has been the absence of disengaged pupils in their lesson time. LA staff reported that teachers noted their PE sessions are easier to run without those girls as they don’t distract others and the teacher doesn’t have to spend time trying to persuade them to get changed and join in. This may result in a more effective lesson for the remainder of the more engaged pupils, but is not necessarily the successful outcome for the girls themselves - who will need to reintegrate into those lessons at some point, nor is it a sustainable and scalable approach to adopt.

It has provided a supported opportunity for schools to capture pupil voice in a robust process, potentially gathering supporting evidence for school inspection and planning future delivery. The pilot has been a mechanism to listen, reflect and act on what pupils are saying, contributing to wellbeing goals and providing additional evidence to demonstrate how pupils are involved in decision making processes. Sessions have been very relevant to educational priorities in terms of discussing healthy behaviours and wellbeing, social media influence and values that can be applied to behaviour in social settings.

Pupils

For pupils, it has been too early at this stage (beyond anecdotal feedback) to establish whether some of the hoped for longer term outcomes for pupils have

been achieved, such as feeling empowered, enjoying activity and sustaining community participation. However, the process has provided:

- Sustained support and interest, helping pupils feel valued;
- Helping pupils think about their own relationship and associations with being active and the positive elements they can gain from it in the future;
- Exposure to non-teacher role models. This benefit has also been highlighted by headteachers and local authority education staff through Sport Wales' Active Education Beyond the School Day pilot;
- An introduction to community providers and an opportunity to develop a relationship with members of the LA sports development team;
- Familiarisation with new leisure and gym settings, removing the hurdle of stepping into somewhere new and not knowing what to do and where to go;
- Support in signing up with local authority leisure services, with officers helping pupils complete the registration process; and
- Engaging opportunities to participate. Normally, many of pupils would be sitting out of PE lessons and don't do much physical activity. They have been physically active as part of the co-creation process and there is sustained support for them to do so for either the whole term or rest of the school year.

“Because these girls, they just don’t want to be in lessons, they want to be mitching or whatever, but certainly when you give the reins to them to have a discussion about things like appearance or enjoyment then they want to be talking about it because it’s relevant to them.”

There is an option to track the pilot beyond March to understand the pupil benefits more fully and LAs were happy to provide further updates on progress. During this review, LAs raised the question of how pupils could provide direct feedback on the pilot. While the focus of this report has been on the process, ensuring pupils have this opportunity is important. To that end, a short, anonymous online survey has been developed and shared with LAs so they can gather feedback from pupils any time that suits them in the first six months of the 2023-24 academic year. An automated report can be downloaded to share with LAs. The survey can be accessed here: <https://online1.snapsurveys.com/rnj8sc>

Section 6: Sustainability and next steps

Sustainability

There are a number of ways that the positive outcomes of the pilot might be sustained:

1. Funding/workforce capacity is secured for the LA to sustain activities over a longer period;
2. Pupils enjoy activities and gain the confidence and interest to sustain their participation in independently, using community settings;
3. Sustainability of learning: through Sport Wales, LAs and consultants sharing insight and co-creation approaches with teams - relevant changes in practice and understanding are adopted; and
4. Co-creation approaches become embedded as part of school curricular and extra – curricular delivery.

Funding/workforce capacity is secured for the LA to sustain activities over a longer period: This first element has been achieved. Importantly, all LAs are continuing these group sessions in varying formats and three LAs are already planning their next cohort of pupils to work with, independently of the consultancy support. The concept of the pilot aligned with current LA work programmes and the cohorts were selected by the WWPG were a target audience they wanted to learn more about in their locality. In practice, two LAs delivered the pilot steps as envisaged at the planning phase. In the other two there were variations to the model according to local capacity and constraints of the schools involved. In either case, how long this can be sustained is uncertain at this stage and dependent on existing staff structures and work programmes being maintained, which may not be the case by the next school year 2023-24. Without a consistent element of funding to repeat the pilot, the co-creation approach might be a temporary gain. Clearly, it is resource intensive to maintain support for these cohorts and we also know there are plenty more pupils in similar positions who could benefit from a more bespoke offer. Sport Wales might want to consider how this way of working is supported through core funding for the local authority workforce. may require changes in provision.

Pupils enjoy activities and gain the confidence and interest to sustain their participation independently: Pupils who 'always' feel listened to are more likely to participate more frequently in sport and enjoy PE and sport at school. This pilot has gone some way to emphasising the importance of consulting and listening in the pilot schools and LAs. As a result, these pupils have benefited from sustained support and interest from the local authority (and researchers), over a six + month period, and have begun participating in physical activities as a result, albeit at a very early stage. This has provided them with a chance for their voice to be heard through this pilot, and more importantly, for their voice to be acted on. Their feedback has been insightful and relevant in helping the workforce understand how disengaged pupils feel, and what the potential solutions might be.

One of the challenges will be moving pupils into community activity and overcoming logistical challenges such as transport, cost, timings and access to

suitable facilities and offers. Officers are leaning towards cheaper activities such as gym and walking, while still listening to what the girls wanted. Even at this current small scale, the potential impact and ability to change the mindset and future activity levels of some young people who are disengaged, or on the cusp of becoming so, would be highly valuable. Tracking the outcomes and impact for the pupils longer term would be beneficial, and LAs were happy to provide further updates on progress beyond the initial pilot phase. Further tracking could also involve follow up with teaching staff to explore whether there has been any impact on educational benefits such as increased attendance, engagement in lessons and levels of enjoyment and interest in physical activity and wellbeing. A further step to explore is whether teachers themselves have done anything different as a result of the pilot findings and their interactions with LA staff.

There is a demand for this kind of support and pilot findings suggests this type of intervention is much needed, as does the national evidence from the SSS. It is difficult to scale without further resourcing but it is feasible to replicate the process in at least three of these LAs. As noted above, some budget is likely to be required for delivery especially as the initial cohorts of pupils are likely to need sustained support to help them establish a habit of participating, and develop the confidence to continue independently.

“Every school has got that cohort of girls – and boys – that need a bit of intervention and support... some schools have got less time to commit to new projects, but overall I think most schools would be quite welcoming of something like this”

“Every school is facing the same challenge”

Sustainability of learning: The process has delivered local insight for the LAs as well as valuable new learning for Sport Wales and the consultants. The pilot enabled in-depth consultation with pupils, capturing real-life examples which resonates with and illuminates the comprehensive quantitative findings from the SSS. This learning should be shared across the organisation and externally so that the wider workforce can reflect and act on additional insight when designing other interventions.

The pilot has provided additional capacity and support for research and demonstrating impact, frequently cited in programme evaluations⁸ by LA teams as an area where they lack the resources to do this widely, as this is often an additional task and skill on top of existing work programmes. It is suggested that short summary papers/presentations and resources from the various outputs of this pilot could be produced to share with the wider workforce, and the partners involved in this pilot to consider how the learning could be cascaded further through mentoring and training support. This review has not identified a likelihood of co-creation approaches becoming embedded as part of school curricular delivery, but further resources/training for teaching staff, perhaps linked to the new curriculum and health and wellbeing area of learning may be something Sport Wales wants to consider as a next step.

⁸ These include 60+, the Free Swimming Initiative and the Healthy and Active Fund

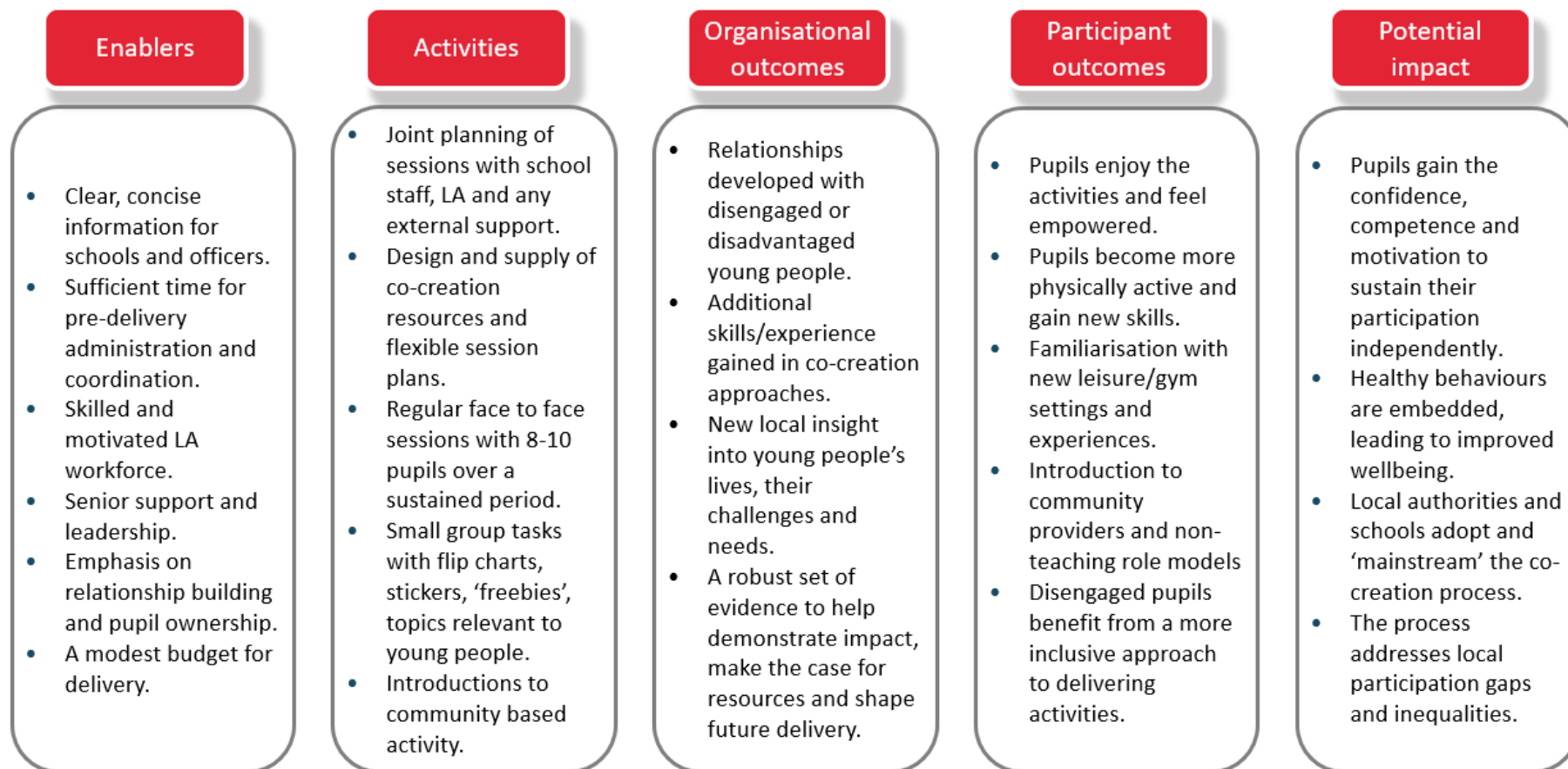
Conclusion

LAs are confident that other schools will want to engage in the process in future, although replicating the project is very much dependent on individual school constraints and reliant on headteacher support. Whether it was feasible to adopt the process in other non-school settings was discussed through interviews, as the tools prepared by Proper Active could be used in many settings. However, this particular target audience of young people are far less likely to be involved in organised community groups of any description where they might be accessible, especially sports⁹. The school therefore remains the best setting for LAs to reach less active and disengaged young people.

Strategically, the pilot has been a good fit and means of addressing local and national aims and policies. The pilot has complemented rather than duplicated existing work programmes. It has fitted in well with the sector's focus on tackling deprivation, targeting female participation and building relationships with schools and young people. For Sport Wales, it addresses several areas of strategic intent: to be person centred, to give every young person a great start, and to ensure everyone has the opportunity to be active through sport.

Through this process evaluation, we have identified things that work well and can be replicated and some alternative ways of delivering steps to speed the process and maximise the opportunities to listen to and build relationships with pupils. The model below sets out the key enablers and conditions that make the process effective, which could be used to extend the co-creation project into new areas of Wales.

⁹ Using Free School Meal eligibility as a measure of deprivation, data from the School Sport Survey shows a 20-percentage-point difference in community clubs participation between pupils in FSM1 schools (low FSM eligibility and relatively less deprived) and FSM4 schools (high FSM eligibility)



Recommendations

Communication and liaison

1. In any future school projects, continue to provide written information for schools, parents and pupils to clearly explain the co-creation approach. Allow sufficient project planning and administrative time for LAs to build a relationship with the school and clarify pupil cohorts (groups of 8-10 work well) before programming in sessions.

Delivering the co-creation approach

2. Consultants and Sport Wales should continue to design co-creation resources that can be used very flexibly according to the school context. Sessions need to be adaptable for delivery in different spaces, with different levels of access to technology and duration of time that pupils can be released from the curriculum.
3. To ensure a good pupil and school experience, deliver sessions face to face and include an element of informal, fun physical activity as part of class based sessions. Regular weekly or fortnightly shorter sessions were preferred by LAs in the pilot phase, helping to build relationships and maintain momentum compared with longer, less frequent workshops.
4. To maximise the benefits of listening to pupil voice, Sport Wales and LAs should encourage teacher involvement in the co-creation process, but not in all sessions. Project design should allocate time with independent non-teaching staff to encourage pupils to speak openly about any school-based issues that prevent them from getting involved in sport and physical activity.

Resourcing

5. Consider using external support in future co-creation projects. The pilot identified this can plug a gap in local research and co-creation capacity. Consultants can provide resources to help LAs and schools to collect evidence to make changes and demonstrate their impact, drawing on examples from across the UK that help engage less active young people.
6. Sport Wales should allocate a modest budget to LAs for future co-creation work, especially for the delivery phase where pupils are supported to put their ideas into practice and take part in physical activity that engages them.
7. Without a consistent element of funding to repeat the pilot, the co-creation outcomes might be a temporary gain. Sport Wales might want to consider how this way of working is supported through core funding for the LA workforce and whether the learning and approach could be cascaded further through pilot partners providing mentoring and training support to others.

Collecting and sharing insight

8. LAs /Sport Wales to ensure insight is shared with teaching staff so they are able to make small adjustments to delivery that may encourage more engagement – but with great care not to identify individual pupils which risks compromising the trust developed during the process.
9. Sport Wales intends to share learning from the pilot with the wider sector and bite sized summary outputs could be developed to support this. Longer term, it is suggested that pilot schools/LAs are followed up to explore the sustainability of delivery and any wider educational outcomes and impact from the pilot.

Appendix A – Project steps and participants

Table 1: Project Steps for Stage 2

Step	Name	Timescale	Summary
1	MEET	October 2022	An initial meeting between the young people and the project team to meet one another, explain the project, and ask the young people if they would like to take part.
2	EXPLORE	October 2022	A research workshop to get to know the young people better, learn about their lives, and their perceptions and experiences of sport and physical activity. This step formed the basis of a full report produced by SLC / Proper Active.
3	THINK	November 2022	An interactive online webinar with the young people to discuss some core behavioural principles which support regular engagement in activities. Proper Active produced Word based summaries of the THINK sessions for LAs.
4	CREATE	January - February 2023	A design workshop where the young people will be supported to create their own ideal activity. Led by the LAs.
5	IN REAL LIFE	March 2023	Delivery of the activity within the community with the young people acting as the steering group to ensure it reflects their vision. Led by the LAs.

Table 2: Participants in the TSCA pilot

Local Authority	LA representatives	School	Pupils
Carmarthenshire	Actif Communities Coordinator Active Young People Officer	Dyffryn Taf	18 mixed gender, later split into groups
Neath Port Talbot	Active Young People Coordinator (changed role during process) New Active Young People Coordinator Active Young People Officer - Llangatwg	Llangatwg Community School	5 female, 1 non-binary
Pembrokeshire	Sports Development Manager (changed role – new lead introduced in August 2022) Sports Development Officer Active Young People Officer	Henry Tudor School	9 female
Swansea	Active Young People Coordinator Active Young People Officer Teacher in attendance for MEET, and for part of CREATE	Dylan Thomas Community School	10 female