

South Yorkshire Active Start

Impact Report
2024/2025

What is South Yorkshire Active Start

South Yorkshire Active Start is a programme of training and development targeting practitioners working with children aged 2-5 years of age, promoting physical activity and physical development to support whole child development and school readiness. Working in partnership with, and funded by, the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) Children and Young People's Alliance, the programme aims to support settings and individuals working with children between 2-5 years with a prime focus of using Physical Activity to support children to be healthy, support learning and set foundations for children to be active for life. Throughout the programme, support has also been offered to practitioners who work with children aged 0-2 as many settings asked for further guidance on babies and toddlers' physical development.

The programme includes hard copy resources, activity ideas and training for any practitioners working with younger children, providing resources initially designed and created by Active Cumbria. The programme has supported a wide range of partners and practitioners across education, community and health within all four South Yorkshire Districts across 2024/2025.

These have included: Local Authority Early Years Teams, Public Health Practitioners, Nurseries, Schools, Family Hubs, Childminders, Childhood Nutritionists, Safeguarding Leads, childcare providers and sports organisations/ foundations.



Working in partnership with, and funded by, the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) Children and Young People's Alliance, the programme aims to support settings and individuals working with children between 2-5 years with a prime focus of using Physical Activity to support children to be healthy, support learning and set foundations for children to be active for life.”

The main outcomes for South Yorkshire Active Start included:



Training and resources provided to settings and Early Years support teams widening the use of physical activity to support outcomes for children. Training has increased the confidence and competence of practitioners in using physical activity and movement to support the Early Years framework.



Settings have increased opportunities for children to be physically active and promoted Physical Literacy through developing a love of movement, and providing children with the relevant physical, social, emotional and cognitive skills to do so.



Supported settings to promote the importance of movement, and support parents and families to be more active more often.

Key Principles of the programme included:



Supporting existing staff and structures to deliver with and through local partners who understand the needs of local settings, families and communities.



Linking to resources and opportunities locally to ensure settings can continue by using what they already have or what is available locally to them.



Development of local champions and tutors to ensure continuation of messaging and support and to celebrate successes and good practice.



Focus communities to target and support settings and individuals within targeted areas of South Yorkshire, focusing on areas of high deprivation and those with poorest health outcomes.

Why is Physical Activity Important?

Physical activity in the Early Years should be full of fun, creativity, imagination, exploration and bring hours of opportunity for physical development in children. The value of active play can be underestimated in the need to develop children's cognitive abilities, often with a misunderstanding of how intrinsically linked they are. Physical activity and opportunities to learn through movement can support children in not just their physical development, but cognitive, social and emotional development too creating happier healthy children. Whilst physical development is one of the Prime Areas across the Early Years Statutory Framework it is also essential in supporting the development of all other areas of learning.

Physical Development

By providing a wide range of movement opportunities we can ensure that children develop the strength and stability to sit up, crawl, cruise and walk. This core strength provides a strong base for wider locomotion skills including running, jumping and climbing. Once stability is mastered hands are freed to develop object control including throwing, catching, kicking as well as everyday skills such as carrying an object, holding cutlery or a pencil. Skills of core strength, stability, locomotion and object control need continual practice to increase perceptual motor skills such as motor planning, spatial awareness and bilateral coordination. These are integral to the development of gross and then fine motor skills.

Social Skills

Shared physical activities can provide children with a sense of belonging and companionship as well as friendship. Overcoming physical challenges supports children with communication skills and team building skills in addition to managing conflict with others. Games and activities support with conversational and listening skills, which are vital as children transition into school.

Physical Literacy

The development of a child's competence in movement will lead to wider confidence allowing risk taking, resilience and success to be achieved. This will increase a child's motivation to move and create a positive relationship with being active by ensuring as many opportunities to be as active are presented as possible. These include opportunities in a range of environments, with other children, if activities provide a sense of achievement, we are more likely to ensure healthier habits in children as they move throughout their childhood.

Emotional Skills

Activities that include movement can support children to manage their emotions and provide opportunities to discuss how they are feeling. Activities can allow children to succeed but also develop resilience and the understanding of trying again to continue to improve. Physical activity can support children with emotional regulation providing an opportunity to refocus. With many instructions and actions to undertake at one time, physical activity supports the development of executive function which can develop focus, following of directions, attentional control and memory.

Sensory Processing

Learning through movement allows for children to explore the world around them understanding texture, temperature and shapes of objects. Children learn the ability to discriminate between wet and dry, hard and soft and to use all of their senses to complete tasks. Through play and movement children are able to understand where their body is through vestibular processing which is essential to good balance, as well as developing their proprioception which tells children if they are stomping, tiptoeing or even pushing too hard when using a pencil.

Visual Skills

As a child continues to move, their visual skills will develop simultaneously increasing the ability to use both eyes together to perceive depth and the ability to track objects. These skills developed support with skills such as tracking words across a page whilst reading, in addition to understanding how close a moving object is. Children develop visual skills in response to changing environments that they experience.

Supporting Child Health

Physical activity in young children can improve mood, energy levels and even sleep routines as children who are active enough every day are often better sleepers. It will support children to maintain a healthy body weight alongside a healthy diet, and will help build stronger bones, muscles, hearts and lungs. Movement and being active can also have a positive effect on children's mental health, reducing anxiety, improving body image and improving relationships with others.

Love for Learning

Physical Activity delivered in the right way for children plays an important role in a developing child and supporting essential brain functions. Structured activities allow for the exploration of vocabulary with children and understanding of directional language. Activity leads to improved motor skills, better thinking and problem solving, stronger attention, concentration and therefore improved learning. These all combine to benefit school performance and readiness to learn.



Why is South Yorkshire Active Start needed?

There is a growing and urgent need for targeted training to support early years physical activity and holistic child development. Currently, less than 20% of children aged 2–5 meet the recommended 180 minutes of daily physical activity. This inactivity, combined with an increase in post-COVID speech, language, and social-emotional challenges, has contributed to a decline in school readiness across the country.

In South Yorkshire, children in Doncaster and Barnsley generally meet early development expectations at levels comparable to the national average, while those in Sheffield and Rotherham tend to lag behind England's average in communication, language, literacy skills, and overall development by the end of Reception (Public Health Fingertips 23/24). Obesity rates for children aged 4-5 in South Yorkshire are higher than the national average across all districts, with severe obesity also notably higher (Public Health Fingertips 23/24). In 2023/24, all districts in South Yorkshire reported a higher percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals than both the national (24.6%) and regional (26.8%) averages, with Sheffield having the highest rate at 32.7%. Similarly, in 2019, all four districts had higher levels of child poverty (IDACI scores above 21.8%) than the national average of 17.1%, indicating persistent socio-economic disadvantage across the area.

To address this, we must equip early years settings and practitioners with the tools to nurture the whole child, fostering motor skills, creativity, social interaction, emotional wellbeing, and a love for learning. While initiatives locally such as Public Health Healthy Start Awards highlight physical activity, there is a clear need for deeper integration and support at the setting level for practitioners and organisations to become more competent and confident in integrating movement in to the lives of our youngest children.

With the expansion of Family Hub sites, there is a valuable opportunity to engage families and embed active habits from the earliest stages of life. However, early years physical activity remains underfunded and under-prioritised despite its proven impact on long-term health outcomes. This training programme aims to work upstream, instilling lifelong habits that can transform health and wellbeing outcomes for children and families in our communities.



Our Approach

We ensured that all partners working across the Early Years were able to access training whether they work in the Education, Community or Healthcare sector to widen the principles of Active Start to any adult working with children or parents in a professional capacity.

From consultation with practitioners it was apparent that there was a need to upskill staff in the use of physical activity to support whole child outcomes and ensuring children were ready for the transition to school. In addition, practitioners discussed how there was a need for practical examples to be shown as to how they could integrate movement throughout the day for children, as well as messaging to parents about the importance of physical activity.

From research in to a range of resources we wanted to ensure that anything provided was able to be used across the whole of the Early Years curriculum and ensure that the programme was not just a Physical Education offer within nurseries. The resources had been developed by Active Cumbria and Early Years consultants in a project across the North West of England and had had large success. Using the learning from this programme we were keen to implement a range of different aspects to test and learn what worked well across South Yorkshire.

“ We undertook a range of research and consultation with early years practitioners, local working groups and networks to understand further the early years landscape across South Yorkshire, and what was currently available. ”

To ensure we were aligning the programme with partners locally it was essential that this was delivered in conjunction with a range of organisations across each district. We undertook a range of research and consultation with early years practitioners, local working groups and networks to understand further the early years landscape across South Yorkshire, and what was currently available.

This allowed us to reach a range of settings and practitioners across each district, target some settings in specific communities and ensured that any implementation was aligned with opportunities locally, leading to further sustainability.



Training was offered in three different ways

Local Tutors

A two day workshop opportunity to create a number of local tutors who can deliver Active Start training to staff and a range of settings (train the trainer).

This included training early years support teams in local authorities, public health staff, school games organisers, local sport foundations and child health and postnatal practitioners.

Local Champions

A two day workshop opportunity for practitioners identifying as delivering models of good practice already in their setting.

An application process highlighted an initial 20 champions who were then challenged with developing and delivering Active Start across their setting and with other local organisations and staff. Champions included nursery staff, university staff, family hub early years leads, teachers, childcare providers and local authority staff.

Direct Support

A one day workshop delivered in each of the four districts locally providing direct training to settings and staff. An additional weekend shorter workshop was also developed to support childminders who struggled to attend weekday training.

This includes a range of classroom and practical activities and provides resources for all attendees to take back to their setting. Delegates attending includes teachers, nursery staff/ managers, family support workers and sports coaches.



Resource Summary

Training

Both classroom and practical based workshops which allow for an exploration of resources provided. The sessions highlight the importance of physical activity and physical development for children regarding health as well as school readiness. Practical activities highlight how physical games and challenges can be adapted to suit the needs of children of all ages and abilities. Training discusses the importance of children experiencing physical activity both indoors and outdoors as well as the use of music to support positive experiences. Time is spent during the session analysing what resources are already available in each setting that can be used to increase movement, including active storytelling, and also allows for settings to share examples and other wider resources with each other. Following the training a range of resources and files are shared virtually with delegates who can then implement this with other staff in their setting too.

Activity Cards

The resources focus on the physical development of children ensuring that they experience a range of activities leading to the development of a wide and varied movement vocabulary. Every area of the EYFS curriculum is delivered through the vehicle of physical activity. Each activity explores equipment needed, how to adapt games, top tips and what to look out for. The cards also explore why this is important, how this links to Prime Areas of Learning and the EYFS curriculum and also what vocabulary may be useful to discuss with children through the games.

“Each activity explores equipment needed, how to adapt games, top tips and what to look out for.”



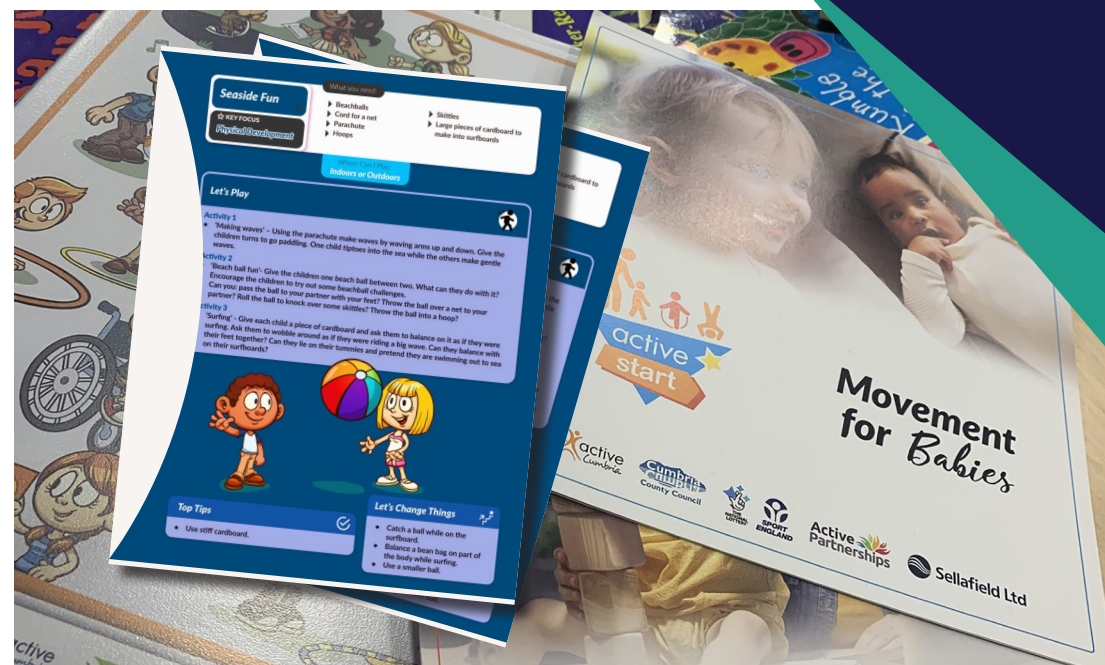
Parent Cards

Alternative activities that can be undertaken at home were provided to each of the settings accessing training. These cards include some information for parents on the importance of play and physical activity for children as well as practical examples of games to play. Activities include a basic use of equipment, or no equipment at all as well as some adaptations that can be made. These are designed to support stay and play activities, as well as active homework challenges that settings can promote to parents and are themed under stability, locomotion and object control.

Toddler & Baby Resources

Throughout the programme practitioners identified that they also needed further support for the 0-2 age range and for staff working with babies and toddlers and new parents. Leaflets were developed which included stepping stones for parents to understand developments needed to support younger children.

As part of the training practitioners are challenged to take resources and to implement in various ways that suit the needs of their setting and children. Practitioners are also challenged to consider which children and families would benefit further from increased physical activity and to monitor what has worked well for all their children and also for individuals. Tutors also explored with practitioners how they could get important information and opportunities to parents around physical development.



“ These are designed to support stay and play activities, as well as active homework challenges that settings can promote to parents and are themed under stability, locomotion and object control. ”

Active Start By Numbers

Key  IDAC1 = 1  IDAC1 = 2  School

98 **Total Staff Trained**
(workshops, tutors, champions)

112 **Total Settings Engaged**

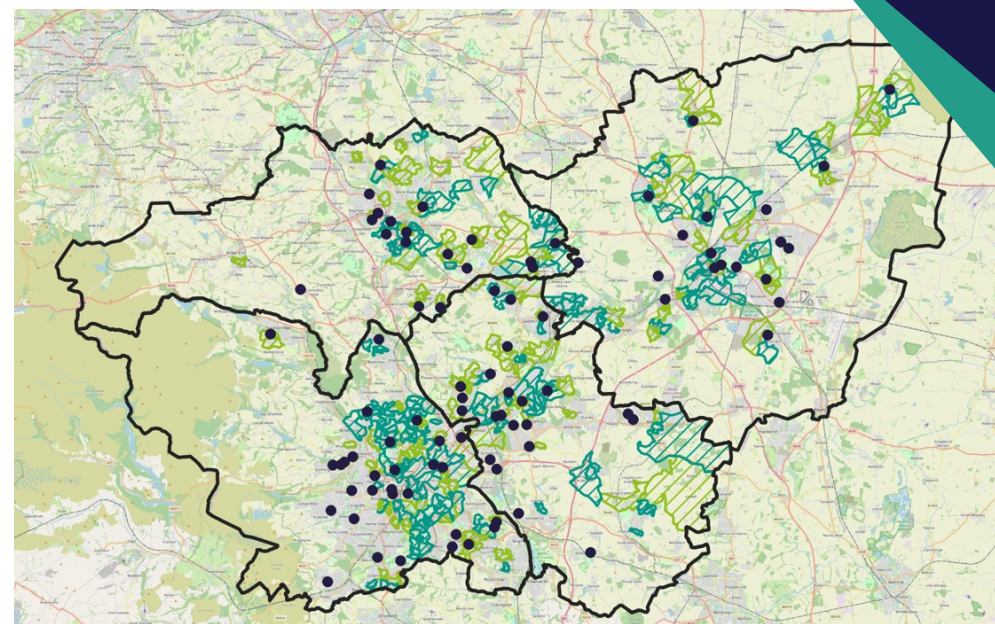
66
Workshop Attendees

12
Tutors Trained \
Train the Trainer

20
Champions Trained /
Train the Trainer

11
Childminders

7
workshops delivered – Sheff
Barnsley/Doncaster/Rotherham
plus childminder workshop,
champions/train the trainer and
tutors/train the trainer



From the number of follow up surveys completed (49):

Approximately, 1388 children have been impacted by the training

Approximately, 821 families have been impacted by the training

Approximately, 129 additional further staff have been upskilled

4 Additional Conference Workshops delivered including the Sheffield Move More Festival, South Yorkshire Children and Young People Alliance Conference, Sheffield Schools Get Active Conference and the Doncaster Public Health CYP Conference.

Pre to Post Training Insights

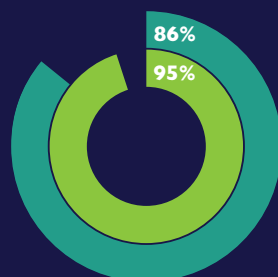
To evaluate the course's impact, we measured participants' agreement with five statements both before and after the training. Below is a summary of how agreement levels ("Agree" or "Strongly Agree") shifted from before to after the training.



Training Outcome

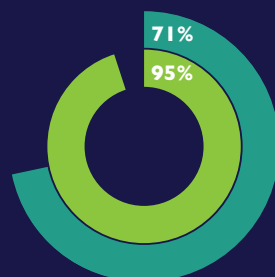
■ PRE: Agree and Strongly Agree %

■ POST: Agree and Strongly Agree %



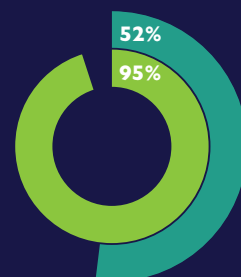
I understand the importance of physical activity and physical development during the early years.

+9%



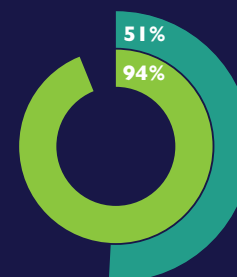
I have the confidence and skills to support a child's development through physical activity and active play.

+24%



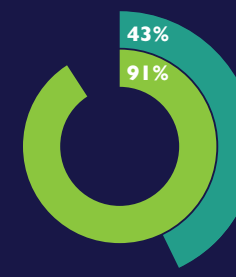
I feel equipped to support and encourage parents and carers to become more active and connected with their children.

+43%



I have a good understanding of the physical activity guidelines for children and the importance of physical literacy.

+43%



I understand how to plan and deliver all areas of the early years foundation stage curriculum through physical activity and movement.

+48%

Agreement with all five statements increased following the course, indicating a positive shift in participants' confidence and understanding. The greatest improvements were seen in; supporting parents and carers, understanding of physical activity guidelines and planning and delivery, highlighting where the training made the most meaningful difference.

Of the 64 respondents to the post survey, 62 (97%) rated the likelihood of recommending this training course to a friend or colleague as 10 (extremely likely).

What course attendees told us

“ Would recommend to others who have little knowledge of the impact of physical activity on children’s learning and development. Very useful. ”

“ I feel like I have lots of information to share and implement back at school and feel confident to do so. ”

“ I really enjoyed the training. I liked the pace of delivery and the fact that we had a chance to try some activities, in such an amazing venue. I have already tried some of the activities in my setting and spoken to parents about how we are going to incorporate even more physical activity into our planning. ”

“ Lovely day. Very informative and practical. I feel much more confident in applying physical development to all aspects of EYFS in my classroom and passing this onto our EY team. ”



From the follow up surveys with practitioners there have been numerous outcomes identified across the programme. Below are just some aspects of what the settings shared with us as examples of changes noted:

Impact on the setting

- ▶ Increased opportunities to be active in daily routines
- ▶ Increased outdoor time for children
- ▶ Increased staff confidence to promote physical activity
- ▶ Delivering whole curriculum through movement
- ▶ Targeting children who need further support

Impact on the children

- ▶ Improvement in Gross & Fine Motor Skills
- ▶ Increased concentration and engagement in learning
- ▶ Information retention and memory through using movement
- ▶ Core strength to sit still and listen and engage in carpet time
- ▶ More confident to take risks and engage in active play with other children

Engaging Parents & Families

- ▶ Active Homework Challenges
- ▶ Promotion through social media and parent apps
- ▶ Parent inductions includes physical activity
- ▶ Parent Activity Sessions in settings
- ▶ Regular Stay and Play Sessions

Examples of Resources Being Used

- ▶ Active at home challenges for families
- ▶ Healthy day poster shared at family support sessions
- ▶ Baby & Toddler Focus resources
- ▶ 1:1 Interventions with individual children
- ▶ Curriculum Planning for all staff

Impact Stories

Rotherham Early Years and Childcare Team

Two Early Years specialists within the team at Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council undertook the tutor training allowing them to embed the principles of Active Start across their work with a view to delivering workshops across their offer in the future. The training sparked an immediate desire to share its powerful messages.

One of the staff members who attended the training said **“The training delivered startling statistical insights and outlined expectations around physical activity in early childhood. It emphasised the importance of physical literacy in supporting school readiness, offered practical strategies for engaging parents and families, and introduced a fantastic resource for settings. As a local authority, we knew instantly that we wanted to be part of the Active Start programme, as it aligned perfectly with our ongoing mission to establish healthy foundations for the children of Rotherham.”**



Following the training, staff had the opportunity to observe the Active Start tutor in delivering the full suite of materials as part of a local one day workshop with early years providers and school teachers. This provided clear and practical overview of how the tutors could adapt and implement the training further for Rotherham's early educators.

Since completing Tutor Training the staff have delivered an additional full-day session to delegates who did not attend the central training, who were equally inspired to return to their settings and increase the level of physical activity. This has

allowed the number of settings across Rotherham accessing support to increase. The team have already planned the next session for the Autumn term of 2025, with a third cohort planned for the Spring term of 2026 supporting PVI nurseries and childcare practitioners through collaborate work with family hubs to widen key messages to families. From the training delivered by the Rotherham MBC tutors 100% of settings attending said that it has enhanced or significantly enhanced their knowledge in this area and 100% said they now felt confident of very confident in applying knowledge from their training.

Doncaster Early Years Inclusion Team

The Early Years Safeguarding & Welfare Officer, as part of the Doncaster Early Years Inclusion Team, undertook the Active Start Tutor Training, and was provided a range of resources to enable her to add physical activity in to conversations with individual settings, to practitioners and through family support sessions. By utilising their Early Years networks locally and connections in to settings, this has meant that the programme as a whole has been able to reach a wider number of settings and providers in Doncaster. An example of this included the direct connections to childminders across Doncaster who attended the specific workshop designed for them.

Throughout this work the member of staff has also trialled a 1:1 in depth support offer to an individual PVI nursery in Doncaster training a large number of staff in one setting, providing coaching to the physical development lead, as well as modelling and follow up sessions. Further conversations have taken place with a range of different settings around increasing the use of physical activity for targeted children including those with special educational needs and disabilities and those children who have persistent struggles with emotional regulation.

“

Yes, one child in particular stood out — a boy who was usually quite reserved and preferred quiet activities. After introducing some simple movement games such as basketball and shooting the ball in a hoop or even just simply being able to bounce the ball for longer than 2 bounces. He has become more willing to join in other activities and started to engage more with his peers during active play. Over time, his confidence grew, and he began taking part in group games independently. It was lovely to see how physical activity helped support his social and emotional development as well as his physical skills.”

Zest Community, Sheffield

The Parenting Volunteer Manager for Zest undertook the champion course in order to further prioritise physical activity and health across their work in Upperthorpe and across Sheffield as a whole. Whilst increasing the opportunities to promote physical activity through stay and play activities they have also included activities within parenting workshops as well as supporting all of their community staff and a number of parenting volunteers across the city. These have been trained to further promote messages on the importance of physical activity and physical development to families and parents most in need. Parents have highlighted the following in response to their workshops in communities; **"Frightening statistics, was a great way to learn about getting active with our children," "Encouraging and fun, I understand more why my children want to run, jump and climb,"**



We have a little boy who has cerebral palsy and he has benefited from the small activities building his mobility."

Doncaster Council Family Hubs

Four staff from the Family Hub Team across Doncaster attended champions training and were provided resources to deliver Active Start across their eight sites. This has been delivered differently in each of the sites with some examples including; a six week programme of activities to try at home for families, a Male Carer play session, family sports day, discussions with parents on 1:1 support, Active Storytelling and widening Stay and Play activities. Staff have used the practitioner booklet to implement some activities across sessions and have utilised the baby and toddler booklets to specific groups as home learning. Nurseries are also situated across some of the family hub sites and one of the next steps is to support the nursery staff in increasing physical activity through the day. Across the family hub sites times are very limited between prescribed sessions and therefore it has been important to integrate Active Start in to what is already taking place.

Rotherham United Mini Millers Programme

The Active Start programme has been successfully integrated into the setting of Mini Millers on a weekend which includes a number of sessions targeting parents and younger children, engaging them in football related activities. Significant progress has been made in engaging participants in play and movement introducing an increased amount of age-appropriate activities designed to promote the development of fundamental movement. The updated programme has been designed to be fun and interactive, which has kept the participants engaged but has moved to be more specific to gross motor skills, core strength and stability for children. The Rotherham United Community Trust Community Sport Coach said: **"One of the highlights that we took away from the training programme was the benefit of participating in physical activities for babies and toddlers, including strengthening bones and muscles, posture and flexibility, which we will use in other classes for families moving forward. The children love the Active Start challenges as part of Mini Millers, and it's rewarding to see them become more confident in completing them with their parents involved, as the sessions progress."**

Tinsley Meadows Academy, Sheffield

Active Start has engaged over 200 children on a daily basis across the academic year. The programme has given Early Years more presence in the Physical Education side of the school, resulting in changes to the school timetable to include more active time and access to active spaces for younger children. Younger pupils can now be active in other ways; activity is not restricted to outdoor learning or PE lessons.

The whole school ethos has become more active, with children's movement at the forefront. Children have become more active during free play, and sit down less. When children do sit on the carpet, they are much more focused and able to sit for longer periods. Staff have noticed children becoming more excited about movement classes; they look forward to the classes and are highly engaged during the activities.

The EYFS lead for the school stated: **“We have used more of a whole class approach as many of the children within our setting are from homes that do not always have access to garden or large spaces to run around. This meant that as we started to introduce it these children became significantly more active and were able to improve their gross and fine motor skills through the activities that had been planned.”**

One of the parents at the school said: **“I’ve been pleased with the variety of physical activities my son has been taking part in at nursery. From running and climbing to dancing and obstacle courses, he’s now always engaged in fun, energetic play that keeps him moving and active throughout the day. Another benefit has been how these activities have helped improve his sleep. After a day of movement and outdoor play he winds down much more easily at bedtime and sleeps more soundly though the night.”**

“

One child in Foundation stage two has struggled with his fine motor skills since September 2024. He is now participating in Mini Movers which was recommended through Occupational Therapy. Since starting the Active Start programme and Mini Movers, the child is beginning to develop both his gross and fine motor skills.”



Fox Hill Primary School, Sheffield

Learning from the programme has been shared with all other staff across the school, including those working with pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

Teachers are now equipped to integrate more activity into timetabled planning throughout the week. Additional resources are now in place to deliver targeted interventions around physical development for children with additional needs.



“

A child was unable to put on their own coat, we used various techniques to build upper body strength. Rolling large tyres, positioned our bodies like a table then lifting alternate arms up. This enabled the child to put on their coat and be more independent. The parents noticed at home they were more independent at doing it themselves.”

Greystones Preschool, Sheffield

Following the training the Physical Development Lead fed back to the whole staff, summarising the key points from the workshop. They showed examples from the resource pack and discussed how the aim of the programme is to increase physical activity throughout all areas of EYFS. Emphasis was put on crossing the mid-line and the importance of increasing core strength in order to develop the fine motor skills, which tied in with other courses and training the preschool had done. Resources have been used during morning time (registration, bucket time, days of the week & weather) and across the specific themes/topics covered to help learning.

The setting have:

- integrated the activities in to their learning and used equipment such as tambourines to widen engagement and excitement for children.
- shared a few ideas from the smaller parent resource pack in the newsletter and encouraged parents to take part at home.
- found that a number of staff did not feel confident enough to pick up a resource card and have a go on their own, and therefore they have selected a card on a Friday which will be modelled and used the following week as an activity to integrate across the nursery week.
- There are also a range of movement opportunities integrated throughout each child's day including dance and outdoor play.



The Physical Development Lead Practitioner for the setting said:

“The traffic light game has helped a number of our children to navigate space and follow commands and improved their general movement and spatial awareness. The dice rolling team game is another favourite, where we often use mini figures/animal toys for them to collect and match to the number on the dice. I think it'd be great if more non-specialists could actually attend the course to gain confidence. I will also aim to lead staff training with all staff in September and try and help build their confidence. I absolutely loved the course and have recommended it to everyone!”

Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust

The Public Health Nurse in the 0-19 team, as well as a number of nutrition lead nurses across community and schools attended training to widen their knowledge and opportunities to discuss physical activity with specific children and families alongside healthy weight and food. This has supported the nurses in discussing activity with families on a one to one basis in their homes across Sheffield, offering practical suggestions and ideas from the Active Start materials.

Families often have limited spaces and equipment and Active Start ideas and parent cards have been used to integrate some physical activity and physical development for younger children. Parents have reported an increase in the amount of physical activity their child does.

Children are targeted specifically based on the information gathered during the initial assessment, particularly their activity levels currently. So far the training has been used on an individual basis working directly with families, although as part of a wider 0-19 piece of work the staff who are now trained to deliver this are looking to pull together further workshops for other staff across the Sheffield Children's hospital teams.



“ One of my children had delays in their physical development from an early age. She joined our setting at three years old having only just learnt to walk, but still struggled. They could not jump and got tired very easily. We and her family have noted how she has become so much more active. She now runs, jumps and climbs around the setting eagerly. Having constant physical activity within the setting has enabled her to develop her physical skills at an amazing rate and everyone is very proud of them. ”

Southfield Primary, Doncaster

The Active Start training has had a positive impact on the Nursery setting for over 70 children. Staff have since embedded movement into daily routines to support the whole Early Years Curriculum through maths and phonics, using actions such as jumping to syllables or counting through steps.

The workshops have helped staff view physical development as a core part of learning and not just within PE sessions or physical development sessions. Southfield have further adapted continuous provision to include obstacle trails and movement-based games linked to topics being taught, improving engagement and confidence, especially for quieter children who may sometimes shy away from physical activities. The training also reinforced the importance of language, teamwork, and resilience during active learning which has supported physical activity to become more purposeful, playful and inclusive for pupils.



We now have more children riding bikes and balance bikes to Nursery and going to the bike track at Forge and the pump track in Hillsborough park.”

Sunnyfields Primary, Doncaster

Since completing the training, Sunnyfields have integrated more purposeful physical activity into their daily routine. The training helped the teaching assistant to understand the importance of movement not just for physical development, but also for children's concentration, emotional regulation, and social skills. They have further increased structured active play sessions in both indoor and outdoor spaces in what was an already active setting through continuous provision. Transitions have been adapted to include movement such as using action songs or movement games between activities which has helped reduce restlessness and improve behaviour for some children. The school nursery have been creative about using transition times or shorter bursts of activity rather than long sessions to ensure children are increasing their active minutes. Limited indoor space sometimes made it hard to keep children active throughout the day however an increase in outdoor activities and use of wider school facilities such as forest school areas and green spaces has been beneficial.

The Teaching Assistant stated; **“Using physical activity to support learning we have seen noticeable improvements in children's balance, coordination, and overall movement confidence. They are more willing to try new physical activities and are showing greater control in tasks like jumping, hopping, and climbing. The regular exposure to active play has also supported their fine motor skills, especially when we combine movement with things like mark-making or sensory play.”**

The school have provided an increase in physical activity for all children in addition to having a focus on those with additional learning needs to support learning in different ways through movement.

Hawthorn Primary Doncaster

The Reception Teacher at the school said: “We have used a number of the activities within our class which has helped to bring the curriculum to life for some of our children. This has helped them to retain things in particular our focus texts which we have included a lot of actions to help them to retell it. It has become evident that by adding actions has enabled them to recall stories from term to term supporting their memory.”

Active Start resources have been used to support gross motor skills in children and have been included in things such as sports week. There has been a distinct increase in the amount of risky play allowed, which has sometimes been challenging, but the children have embraced the freedom to analyse their own risk. The school have identified that some children who don't necessarily enjoy physical development have changed their minds and have enjoyed participating in the fun and varied activities. Teachers have focused on all the children however have made use of improving some children's motor skills during specific intervention time. This has been children that need to build gross motor skills which has then had a positive impact upon their fine motor skills allowing them to hold their pencil etc in preparation for year one. The school have provided all new parents with Doncaster's Starting Reception information booklet and have also linked this with Active Start allowing parents of new children to get involved at home during the summer, promoting the importance of physical activity to parents and to showcase how important it is to the school as the children enter the new stage.



Joseph Locke Primary, Barnsley

Children have said that they enjoy participating in the different activities linked to Active Start. Activities incorporated in classrooms and more active spaces have involved the development of balance, co-ordination, fundamental movement skills, control and strength for all pupils in EYFS.

School have suggested that children have benefited from active learning and that an increase in movement has supported them with consolidation of aspects of the wider curriculum including: odd and even numbers, doubling and halving, number bonds, healthy foods and basic phonics skills. Physical Development has improved since the beginning of the programme due to adding physical activities into classroom teaching on a daily basis. School staff created a questionnaire to share with parents/carers to gather a more in depth understanding of their child's physical activity outside of school hours.

This showed which children the school needed to support further and parents who may also be interested in additional support. The member of staff who attended the training then also delivered their own Active Start PE workshop to Foundation Stage two parents and children to show them games that they can do outside of school, using the resource. Nine parents from the class attended the workshop with positive feedback being provided such as **“that was so much fun.”**

The EYFS lead who undertook the training said:

“Within EYFS, we have some children who struggle with their fine motor development. In order to support them, we have increased their physical activity which has developed their strength and control. As an EYFS team we have shared some of the Active Start activities with parents/carers via our home learning app, Seesaw and it has been great to engage parents in activities.”



Worsborough Common Primary, Barnsley

Through foundation stage the school have focused on physical development, on crossing the midline and gross and fine motor skills which has had a positive impact, especially on left handed writers. School have hosted family sessions using the activity cards to engage parents in their children's activity and promote the importance of being active and reducing screen time. Lots of parents have informed school that the children have recreated the activities at home since this session and activity outside of school has increased.

The school have also used the resources within outdoor provision to guide new teaching assistants in activities with the children to develop their motor skills. School have implemented Active Storytime where all children engage in regular physical activity and now all children participate and move around for every story time.

Pupil Premium children have also participated in small group sessions with the activity cards and have had increased access to physical development sessions as these children often do not participate in out of school activities due to the cost of activities and availability of things locally. The school have also worked closely with their attached pre school supporting them in promoting physical development with the younger children which will help with transition moving forward.



Linx Preschool, Rotherham

Have taken the learning resources and delivered CPD and sharing of ideas with all staff. This has led to the Preschool ensuring that they are incorporating a wide range of opportunities to be active within the daily routine for all children. Staff have started to use different books to get the children to move in different ways and have found that active Storytime has become a key opportunity to embed movement, strength and balance through acting out characters.

Linx Preschool have shared several resources with parents and asked them to share photos of their child doing the different activities outside of preschool where the children are celebrated for moving more. They have also shared the importance of moving and being active with parents through videos and information leaflets provided. Staff have said that the core strength of all children has increased and that more children are wanting to take part in physical activity and are enjoying the different activities offered.

Hopscotch Nursery, Rotherham

Whilst there are limited resources within the nursery, the Active Start activities have been used in developing children's physical development skills using what is available. The nursery found the training particularly useful in showcasing how to adapt activities to suit the different needs of children, but also to tweak it and be able to use resources that they already had.

Nursery have provided information to parents in the entrance and promoted physical activity on drop off and pick up times. Through increasing structured physical activity they have seen children becoming more independent with their personal needs and more confident during play activities.

They have identified individual children who have needed further support to allow them to be active and more independent. One child was unable to jump and staff have used activities, core strength and balancing to develop this further. This has included jumping in puddles and bouncing on a space hoppers to develop their strength to do so. Nursery have engaged parents at handover, encouraging the children to show their parents what they've been doing as well as providing more information within the children's termly reports explaining to parents their child's next steps, giving tips on how to achieve this at home.

Catcliffe Primary School Rotherham

Following the training they are now a much more active setting, with physical movement incorporated into every aspect of daily routines and planning. Specific activities from the booklet have been used often, however it has been noticed that the ethos around using physical activity in all aspects of their curriculum has significantly improved and added to physical development that they were already delivering. One of the children attending had delays in their physical development from an early age and had joined the setting at three years old having only just learnt to walk, being unable to jump and getting tired very easily. The school and family have implemented a range of Active Start activities and other interventions and have noted how she has become so much more active every day. She now runs, jumps and climbs around the setting eagerly.

The teacher stated:

“Having constant physical activity within the setting has enabled her to develop her physical skills at an amazing rate and everyone is very proud of her progress. All pupils at the school are much more active, less tired at the end of the day and even have Much better pencil control, sitting on the carpet more easily.”



Learning

It is essential that messaging and support is offered through networks already working in the Early Years sector to capture as many settings and practitioners as possible. This has allowed the programme to reach Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings and childminders where it may have otherwise struggled to reach. It has been important to work with trusted partners locally to share messages.

Some networks are stronger in certain areas and the programme has had varying levels of success in each district across the community, health and education approach. It is hoped that with time these partnerships will continue to be explored as part of a wider Active Start programme allowing for good practice and case studies to be shared.

Allowing space for practitioners to share good practice and consider what they already have available to them is essential as part of the next steps post training.

Whilst providing hard copy resources as part of training is a large expense this has been an important aspect in allowing for activity ideas to be shared with wider staff in settings, as well as parent/ families.

Centralised training has allowed for the programme to reach a large number of settings across South Yorkshire. There have been requests to provide in house training for all staff however capacity to undertake this level of central support has been limited, but may have a wider impact to support changes across all staff internally.

There was a high number of settings and individuals who had signed up for the training workshop however did not attend on the day. This was often due to staffing issues within settings with illness and a need to ensure ratios were adhered to.



This meant 26 places were taken but then not utilised.

No childminders attended initial training opportunities. From further consultation they were unable to sign up to CPD through the day due to missing payment for a day and also letting down their families. We therefore adapted a shorter weekend workshop to try and accommodate this where possible which received positive feedback as a pilot.

By allowing a flexible approach to implementation of the resources, this has allowed for settings to implement changes at their own pace. This has been beneficial for most however has meant in some instances that it has become less of a priority. There is a potential that further 1:1 support for settings and regular opportunities to check in would be useful throughout the programme with local champion/ officer capacity.

Messaging to parents and further support for activities at home continues to be the most difficult to undertake and capture the progress made.

Whilst a small amount of grant funding was provided to the Champions this was not enough to allow them significant time

away from their settings to work with another. It may be more useful to have fewer champions who receive a larger amount of capacity/ time to undertake this role, or to allow sharing of good practice and support in an alternative way.

Working with the Early Years support teams across local authority (these work slightly differently in each district) has allowed further embedding of the programme and sustainability in terms of them adding the principles of Active Start to their comprehensive support offer for nurseries, schools and childminders.

There is a need to explore further support for community partners and wraparound childcare outside of school settings where possible.

Whilst it is important to target provision in specific communities all settings have children who need further support and to understand the use of physical activity and movement to do so.

Settings that have implemented sustained increases in physical activity have commented positively on the impact on physical, social and cognitive development of their children.





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