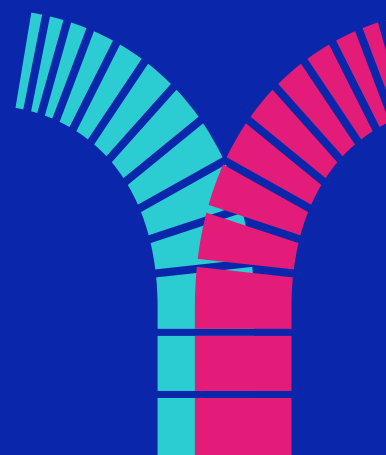




Alternative Provision *toolkit*



About this toolkit

This guide has been created to support **School Games Organisers (SGOs)** and **Active Partnerships** to better understand and engage with Alternative Provision (AP) settings – schools or centres that support pupils who are not in mainstream education due to exclusion, health needs, or other complex circumstances.

While there are just under 300 registered AP settings with a Unique Reference Number (URN) in England, over 140,000 pupils access AP placements each year – many of whom are among the most vulnerable in our education system.



Did you know?

In 2022/23 there were 9376 permanent exclusions up from 6495 in 2021/22

Of these permanent exclusions 4716 were pupils with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) or on SEND support, that's 50.29%!

These pupils often face social, emotional, and mental health challenges. Traditional approaches to sport and PE may not meet their needs. But when done well, physical activity can be transformative – helping build confidence, relationships, and wellbeing.

- This six-step toolkit is here to help you:
- Understand the AP landscape
- Build relationships with settings
- Co-create inclusive, meaningful activity offers
- Embed a long-term, sustainable approach

Within this toolkit, you'll find data insights, lived experience quotes, and links to relevant research and resources. It's not about doing more – it's about doing things differently.



What is an Alternative Provision school film:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTKFYZilz-s>

Step 1 Start with research

Understand the landscape in your area

Identifying local AP settings can be tricky – not all have a URN, and provision can be delivered in a variety of ways. A good starting point is to explore state-run AP schools in your county using the Youth Sport Trust Knowledge Bank.

YST Knowledge Bank – Find AP schools

Once you begin conversations with one or two schools, doors often open to others. Focus on building trust and listening to their priorities – success in this space grows through relationships.

TOP TIP

Start small. Choose one or two schools to build a connection with. Learn what works, what doesn't, and adapt before scaling up.

Step 2 Show you understand the sector

Build knowledge and clarify your why

Before designing an offer or approaching schools, take time to understand the AP sector and agree, as a county or team, why this is a shared priority.

Pupils in AP often face barriers such as trauma, disrupted learning, and unmet health needs. For them, PE and sport can provide more than just physical benefits – they can offer connection, belonging, and a pathway to better wellbeing.

Yet many AP settings face real challenges:



Only **57%** have outdoor space.



Over **half** lack a dedicated indoor sports area.



Many have no trained PE teacher – with general staff or coaches stepping in.

These constraints require a different approach – one built on flexibility, compassion, and partnership.

Resources to support this step:

- [Leeds Beckett University research – PE in AP](#)
- [Wave Film: Voices from AP](#)



I Like PE when its social. Like when you interact with other people who are supportive of you and what you are trying to do. That makes me feel wanted and it's a nice feeling.

PUPIL, AP SETTING

TOP TIP

Take a team-based approach. Discuss what you've learned, share insights, and agree how you'll act together. Strength comes from collective effort and shared purpose.

Step 3 Design an offer that works for them – and you

Listen first, offer later

Once you've identified potential settings, your first step should be listening – not offering.

There are reasons many AP schools haven't previously engaged in School Games or mainstream PE programmes. They know their pupils best and may have felt that these opportunities didn't reflect their needs or reality.

Rather than arriving with a fixed offer, arrange a school visit or host a county meeting at an AP setting. Seeing the environment and hearing from staff can shift perspectives and spark new ideas. Consider setting up a **county steering group** with engaged AP staff – their insights will be invaluable.

Pupils in AP settings say they feel more motivated by **personal progress** than by competing with peers. Focus on **experience**, not **competition**.

Resources to support this step:

- [Sport Sanctuaries resources](#)
- [Wave Film 2](#)

TOP TIP

Show you understand their challenges and that you're committed to doing things differently. Even small-scale, high impact offers can create powerful change. It's not about numbers, it's about how the School Games can have a positive impact on small groups.

Step 4 Co-design with staff and pupils

Work together to create safe, inclusive offers

Co-design is one of the most effective ways to engage AP settings. Staff know their pupils' needs – and pupils themselves can provide rich insight into what will help them feel safe, supported, and motivated.

Use focus groups, informal chats, or class-based activities to gather youth voice. Remember, behaviours often seen as "challenging" may be a result of anxiety or trauma. Creating emotionally safe environments is key.

We must recognise that PE can offer more than just movement – it can be a **space for healing, growth and connection**.

Resources to support this step:

- [Youth Voice Toolkit \(PDF\)](#)

TOP TIP

Use tools like the Youth Voice Toolkit to start the conversation. Be open and clear that you're prepared to adapt based on what you learn. This builds trust and long-term collaboration.

Step 5 Review and refine

Reflect, adapt, and grow

You won't get everything right straight away – and that's okay. Trial, error and adaptation are part of the process.

Keep checking in with staff and pupils about what's working and what could change. Don't be afraid to tweak existing activities or reframe opportunities to suit your audience. Even small shifts can make a big difference.

Build in regular review points as a county team – and keep AP on the agenda. Sharing back what you've learned shows your commitment to learning and evolving together.

Resources to support this step:

- [How can you support the Alternative Provisions across your School Games Area?](#)

TOP TIP

Make Alternative Provision a regular discussion points at county meetings – not a last-minute item. This keeps inclusion and equity front of mind and helps build a culture of continuous improvement.

Step 6 Celebrate and share success

Shine a light on impact

Many AP settings feel isolated or under-recognised – especially in relation to sport and enrichment. Sharing positive stories can help shift perceptions and reach more providers who haven't yet engaged. They may be parent led schools, home educating parents, hospital schools, free schools, mainstream schools with attached bases, and multi academy trust schools.

Think creatively about where and how to share impact – from social media and newsletters to Local Authority forums or networks like Pupil Referral Units and Alternative Provision Association (PRUSAP).

Encourage AP settings to share successes in their own comms, too – including achievements like School Games Mark awards or small wins that have made a big difference for their pupils.

Resources to support this step:

- <https://www.prusap.co.uk/>
- https://media.yourschoolgames.com/documents/AP_Blog_October_2023.pdf

TOP TIP

Use the networks and platforms AP settings already engage with – don't expect them to come to you. Storytelling is a powerful tool for opening doors and building momentum.



Youth Sport Trust

SportPark
Loughborough University
3 Oakwood Drive
Loughborough
Leicestershire LE11 3QF

T **01509 462900**

E **info@youthsporttrust.org**

W **www.youthsporttrust.org**



@YouthSportTrust

YouthSportTrust

@YouthSportTrust



Registered charity No. **1086915**
Registered company No. **4180163**