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CASE STUDY
Engaging Girls through Consultation and Transition Events

School: City of Armagh High School, Armagh, NI (ages 11-18)
Project: Year 2 of Girls Active

Section 2: Project Rationale

Rationale
While the school has generally enjoyed relatively good participation rates in girls’ PE, recently this has been affected by the increase in the local Bulgarian Roma population. Girls from this community are more reluctant to take part in physical activity and the teacher reports a low level of fitness among this group (based on the multi-stage fitness test). The school, as a whole, is in the process of developing approaches for working with and integrating the Bulgarian Roma community into the school as much as possible. The school is non-selective, with a grammar school nearby. Establishing strong links with primary schools supports interest in the school among prospective students.

Aim
- To use hockey as a means to provide positive physical activity experiences for primary school girls to support their transition from primary to high school.
- To support the school mission in engaging all girls in physical activity by offering flexible, enjoyable PE lessons that are relevant to them to increase participation.

Activities
Girls Active has been running for 2 years at this school, below is a selection of activities run during this time.

Year 1: A survey among the girls at the school identified some physical activities they’d like to do. As a result, a Colour Run (where coloured corn-starch powder is thrown over participants at different stations on the course) took place in September 2017, soon after the start of the new school year. The PE kit was changed to include the option of a dri-fit (a fabric that moves sweat away from the body) fitted top and leggings. A ‘Get Fit for Summer’ event was held towards the end of the summer term in 2017, with a number of different activities including Zumba and Boxercise offered.

Year 2: A transition event with feeder primary schools focusing on a hockey competition, with some mixed teams, as well as separate girls and boys teams was run in April. 23 schools took part and played in a total of 72 matches across the day. Most of the schoolchildren came from P7, although smaller schools also involved P5s and P6s. The day was organised in conjunction with CR Coaching – a local hockey coach. The GLAMS helped to run the day, organising the schools, making sure each team was ready to play at the right time, distributing water and crisps. They also encouraged the primary school girls and helped to make connections with the P7s who will be joining the school in September. Past pupils of the High School also returned to help umpire the matches.

Alongside organising the transition event, Miss Abrahams has broadened the girls’ PE curriculum, as a result of seeing the impact that the sports offered in the Summer event had on girls’ interest and participation. The school also now offers extra-curricular girls’ football all year round following feedback from the girls.
Section 3: Impact

Impact

Participants:

- **Encouraging new intake of girls to engage with physical activity** – Miss Abraham hopes that the transition event provided a positive first experience among the primary schools that feed into the high school, and that the girls entering the school in September will feel encouraged and inspired to fully participate in PE and extra-curricular activities including hockey. The event also helps primary girls to become familiar with staff and GLAMS before they move into the school, which supports their confidence to transition from primary to secondary school. In fact, during her primary school visits, Miss Abraham has been recognised as the teacher from the hockey tournament, which indicates that a strong connection has indeed been made. She hopes that this will also help in future years as primary school children and their parents make their decisions about secondary schools.

- **Providing a sports-oriented and fun welcome to new school pupils** – the colour run provided a positive welcome to the new Year 8s starting in September and helped to get the school year off to an active and inclusive start.

- **Establishing a more inclusive PE curriculum and extra-curricular activities** – since then, boxercise and girls’ football have both helped to broaden the appeal of PE lessons and extra-curricular activities. Miss Abraham has found Boxercise to be particularly inclusive, as it can be run on a non-competitive basis and allows girls, who might otherwise struggle to take part in team sports, to participate.

- **The confidence of the GLAMS has increased** – with quiet girls coming out of their shell, especially at the transition event where they happily spoke to teachers and primary school pupils and acted as role models to younger girls. They particularly enjoyed seeing previous teachers of theirs from their old primary schools.

- **Girls’ football provides opportunities to engage with other schools/wider community** – girls’ football is growing in popularity in the area, and due to the popularity of the after school club, Miss Abraham has extended the club to run throughout the whole academic year. As a result, the school is now taking part in a wider range of tournaments and friendly matches against local schools. As girls’ football is relatively new to schools within the area, the girls are able to compete against other girls on an equal footing, therefore building the confidence of the girls. This facilitates the aims/work of the PE department and wider school. Some of the girls have joined football teams outside the school, including two girls who have been picked to participate in this year’s Foyle Cup Youth Tournament for their county.

Staff/Wider School:

- **Higher profile for girls’ sport in the school** – the profile of girls’ sport has been raised across the school and teachers are more interested and involved in sports activities generally. The colour run created a buzz around sport and physical activity and pupils were inspired by seeing many teachers, including the principal, taking part.

- **Other teachers more involved in sport** – the colour run and summer event have encouraged participation from a wide range of teaching staff. As a result, staff are now more confident in talking about their involvement in physical activity outside of school and prepared to participate in school events to help encourage pupils. A teacher has now offered to run a badminton club.

- **Ensuring equality in PE provision for boys and girls** – Girls Active has supported Miss Abraham in her aim of ensuring that girls and boys are equally catered for through PE provision and extra-curricular clubs. She feels she has a better understanding of what girls want to get from their PE lessons and of the kinds of things that will appeal to them, which is allowing her to broaden the curriculum and provide different activities.

Section 4: Sustainability and Top Tips

Sustainability

- **Investing in broader PE/extra-curricular provision** – as a result of the first year of Girls Active, Miss Abraham
has bought gloves and skipping ropes so that Boxercise can be incorporated into curriculum PE. This appeals to the girls who do not feel confident in taking part in team sports and has proved popular as an alternative activity to engage with girls that would not normally participate. The school has also run extra-curricular girls football throughout the year, rather than for a 6-week block as they have done previously. Plans are for both these activities to continue.

- **To organise a transition event with an alternative focus/remit** – Miss Abraham hopes to run another transition event next year supported by the GLAMS and is considering the possibility of this being a girls’ only football tournament, with a focus on very small primary schools (5-a-side matches would allow smaller primaries to participate more easily and would support their transition from primary to secondary school).

- **To target Bulgarian Roma girls with appropriate activities and support** – she is also looking into the possibility of working with a Bulgarian teacher to offer dance and basketball sessions to better involve the Bulgarian Roma girls in physical activity. She has plans to invite primary schools with Bulgarian Roma pupils to come to the high school once a month for activities – possibly basketball – and will encourage the Bulgarian girls at her school to meet and support the primary school students that come.

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**Top Tips**

- **Ensuring buy-in from staff and wider community to deliver events** – it can be challenging and time consuming to organise a transition event, considering the large number of schools involved. The event succeeded because it was supported by a large number of people who helped to organise it and ensure the day itself ran smoothly. Working with a coach who was already familiar with some of the primary schools involved was very helpful and the GLAMS were very supportive throughout the event.

- **Consultation is KEY** – involving girls in the design and decision making of programmes helps to ensure they are engaging and inclusive. Asking girls their opinions through the survey enabled Miss Abraham to devise a summer event; seeing the difference this made to girls’ interest has given her confidence to introduce a broader range of activities into the curriculum and provide additional extra-curricular clubs such as girls’ football. The varied activities have captured the girls’ interest and changing their kit helped them to feel more comfortable whilst being active.

- **Establish an effective way of working with the GLAMS** – Miss Abraham acknowledges that it has been difficult to find time to meet with the GLAMS. The GLAMS at City of Armagh come from Key Stage 3 and as they are relatively young, require supervision and guidance. Working with the GLAMS has therefore meant that Miss Abraham has had to make the most of times when she sees them during PE lessons or for extra-curricular activities. Nevertheless, the commitment and enthusiasm of the girls meant that their involvement in and contribution to the transition day were important elements in its success.

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**Section 5: Permissions and Supporting Information**

**Approved quotes – teacher**

“The tournament will help to promote hockey among the primary schools. It’s great for the girls to have a chance to play before they come and hopefully that will encourage them to attend hockey practice when they get here.”

“Boxercise means anyone can take part. Even a less sporty girl can actually be quite strong so the girls really love it.”

“The GLAMS really excelled themselves at the tournament. Some of them are quiet girls but they were just happy to talk to the primary school teachers and the pupils. You saw a different side to them.”

“There’s more of a focus now on what the girls want to do in their PE lessons and I’ve understood better what they’d like to do.”
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<tr>
<th>Consent to share</th>
<th>Leanne Abraham, Head of PE, City of Armagh High School</th>
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Section 1: Project Overview

CASE STUDY

Using GLAMS to Engage Girls in PE and Physical Activity

School: Fort Hill Integrated College, Lisburn, NI
Project: Year 1 of Girls Active

Section 2: Project Rationale

Rationale

Fort Hill is an integrated secondary school of 829 pupils (11-18 years old), of which just over 398 are girls. The PE teacher is keen for all girls at the school to be active and believes that sport and physical activity can not only teach children valuable life lessons, but also positively benefit their participation in other lessons. Year 10 is the most challenging year in terms of girls’ participation in PE, due to issues around body image shaped by the media, embarrassment in front of boys and the influence of older friends/siblings. While the teacher had previously introduced some changes, including a revamped PE kit – which allowed girls to wear skinny tracksuit bottoms and longer t-shirts – as well as including less competitive sports such as Zumba in the PE curriculum, participation rates were still problematic with a number of girls finding reasons to miss PE lessons.

Aim

- To generate new ideas for increasing girls’ participation in PE and increase engagement rates through a range of physical activities.
- To empower GLAMS to design/deliver a programme of relevant activities to improve girls’ confidence and participation in PE/physical activity.
- To contribute to the profile of sport/the PE department at the school and beyond.

Activities

Girls Active Fitness Week

Mrs McGeary brought the group of GLAMS together, with 2 girls from each of Years 10, 11 and 12. Each pair comprised a more ‘sporty’ and less sporty girl, as she felt it was important for the GLAMS to be able to understand ‘both points of view’. The main focus of the programme was a Girls Active Fitness Week taking place in January. The GLAMS came up with this idea after attending the Girls Active Inspiration Day. The GLAMS aimed to achieve a number of things through the week:

- To target girls looking to make new year’s resolutions
- For girls to be able to experience a range of different physical activities that would not normally be offered in the curriculum
- For teachers from across the school to be involved to promote cross curricular awareness of the programme
- For there to be a lasting impact from the week, and for the benefits to be sustained, if possible, through the rest of the year

The GLAMS brainstormed activities, liaised with the principal and, together with Mrs McGeary helped to organise the schedule for the week; they also encouraged girls to take part. The highlights were:

- A Fitness Freddie session (fun dance/fitness sessions)
- Glow in the Dark Zumba delivered by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (the Everybody Active Team at...
LCCC Council have supported the school with a number of additional activities:

- Lunchtime staff and pupil walks
- Workout Wednesday – Circuits afterschool session
- Thigh Thursday – This included frisbee & boxercise sessions and a lunchtime bums and tums session
- A staff volleyball challenge match

The activities taking place during this week were heavily promoted throughout the school and on the school Facebook page, which generated good interest and awareness for pupils, staff and parents alike. The week has been followed up with a Summer Activity Day in the final week of term.

**Girls Active National Coaches Camp**

A Year 14 female pupil attended the Girls Active National Coaches Camp as a Team Leader in March at Loughborough University in England. The pupil was successful in her application to attend this camp and was the only Team Leader to be involved in this camp from Northern Ireland. This experience has really benefitted this pupil, developing her skills to effectively lead a group. These new skills have also benefitted the school and the programme as a whole, as she has acted as a mentor to the younger GLAMS, supporting them and challenging them to think creatively.

### Section 3: Impact

**Impact**

**Participants:**

- **Greater involvement in PE lessons** – Mrs McGeary reports that, across the board, girls are more involved and interested in their PE lessons; this includes girls who often missed PE lessons previously, as well as a small number of girls who used to not attend school on PE days and who are now coming to school and taking part in PE. Girls say that they now have greater confidence about their physical capabilities and so are more willing to take part.

- **Staff inspiring pupils to believe they can participate in sport** – pupils were surprised by the mix of staff that took part in the staff volleyball match, which included staff with differing body somatotypes and fitness levels, as well as by the level of competitiveness that the staff showed in the match. This has helped to inspire a belief that ‘if they can do it, so can I’, encouraging pupils who might previously have thought that physical activity wasn’t ‘for them’.

- **Positive impact on mental wellbeing** – girls report that taking part in physical activity has helped with reducing their stress and giving them time-space away from problems with friends or academic work.

- **Encouraging participation beyond school** – the chance to try different kinds of physical activity during the Fitness Week, including some more lifestyle/individual based activities has also encouraged a handful of girls to enrol at the gym with a friend or their mum. The girls enjoy having instructors from outside the school come in to run activities, as they can have a different, more relaxed connection with them, compared to PE staff.

- **Development opportunity for GLAMS** – organisation of the Activity Week was driven by the GLAMS, and it helped them develop important skills around time management and organisation; the GLAMS also grew in confidence as a result of liaising with a number of staff around the school, including the principal, and in seeing their ideas come to fruition. They act as role models and supported other girls.

- **More positive interaction between pupils and teachers** – there has been a noted improvement in pupil relationships with teachers as a result of the Activity Week. The girls themselves report how much they enjoyed speaking to their teachers in a relaxed atmosphere on the lunchtime walks. They feel more confident with different teachers as a result and are happier to take an active part in a range of lessons.
Staff/Wider School:
- **Boost to profile of sport in the school** – the profile of sport in the school has been raised, with greater appreciation among the staff body of the life skills taught by participation in sport. Successful PE provision is also important as it helps to impact positively on perceptions of the school among new and prospective parents.
- **Increased physical activity and enjoyment among staff** – some of the staff continue to go for lunchtime walks. Staff also enjoyed the volleyball match and are interested in this becoming a regular activity.
- **Improvements in pupil behaviour and participation in lessons** – the Activity Week helped to create a positive atmosphere across the school, with the staff volleyball match and lunchtime walks helping pupils to see a different side to their teachers. Mrs McGeary reports that this has opened up conversations and created a better atmosphere in many lessons, leading to improved behaviour.

Section 4: Sustainability and Top Tips

**Sustainability**
- **Continuing the activities** – the GLAMS and Mrs McGeary were keen to ensure that the Activity Week was not just a one-off, but that the girls could learn things that would carry on through the year. They have kept the momentum going by organising a Summer Activity Day in the last week of term. Some staff and pupils also continue to go for a walk at lunchtime.
- **Introducing additional activities into the PE curriculum** – given the success of the Glow in the Dark activities, Mrs McGeary is hoping to introduce a block of ‘glow sports’ (Zumba and/or dance) into the PE curriculum. The girls feel liberated by exercising in the dark due to the fact that nobody can see what each other is doing and therefore they feel more confident to get involved. She would like to see all girls benefitting from this, across the school years.
- **Exploring fresh ideas for next year** – Mrs McGeary hopes to run a similar high-profile activity next year; she is looking into the possibility of co-ordinating with other local schools to organise a colour run but is also looking forward to seeing what the GLAMS suggest, especially as 2 new Year 10 GLAMS will be joining the group.

**Top Tips**
- **Empower and enable GLAMS to take responsibility** – Mrs McGeary reports that the work of the GLAMS was crucial to the success of this year’s activities. The GLAMS took the lead on coming up with the initial ideas – based on their sense of what would and wouldn’t work – as well as on the actual organisation of the activity week. She says it was important for her to let go of control and allow them to take responsibility. This included being open to their suggestions of trying different activities and being as honest as possible about the limits of her knowledge/abilities as a PE teacher, when it came to trying new and different activities.
- **Support from the principal** – the principal has been very supportive of the Girls Active programme and this has helped to ensure buy-in and participation by the wider staff body.
- **Support from the local council** – the strong relationship between the school and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council has also helped considerably, as the council has been able to supply instructors and Everybody Active Coaches for a number of additional activities which gives more choice to the girls; this supports both school and council targets around physical activity.

Section 5: Permissions and Supporting Information

**Approved quotes**

*Teacher:*

“The participation rate has increased. I very rarely have notes now from girls trying to get out of PE.”

“The children have had a chance to have a conversation with their teachers about something other than just that
subject. I think the atmosphere in the classrooms has improved, they can concentrate on learning now, rather than discipline and behaviour.”

Girls:
“The staff volleyball match was so much fun. The teachers were so competitive, and some of them you wouldn’t expect to be sporty. It means we have a better relationship with them, they don’t seem so boring.”

“I like it when they get people in from outside the school [to run activities]. It gives good vibes. It’s more enjoyable.”
“Doing things to music is more enjoyable. It’s a real stress reliever. You don’t think about your problems so much.”

Consent to share
Rebecca McGeary, PE Teacher, Fort Hill College

Date of case study
2nd July 2018
Section 1: Project Overview

CASE STUDY
Using GLAMS and Transition Events to Engage Girls in PE and Physical Activity

School: Killicomaine Junior High School, Portadown, NI
Project: Year 2 of Girls Active

Section 2: Project Rationale

Rationale
Killicomaine Junior High School comprises Northern Ireland school years 8, 9 and 10 (i.e. ages 11-14, Key Stage 3). It has a strong sports offer and prides itself on its sporting achievements. There is a big emphasis on extra-curricular sports, and traditionally these have been oriented towards provision for the school teams in hockey, netball, athletics and tennis. Mrs Hillis is keen to encourage all girls to be involved in sport and to support the girls to find the physical activity(ies) which best suit them.

Aims
- To build on the momentum from Year 1 and ensure that extra-curricular activities are more varied and diverse to engage all girls in physical activity.
- To increase awareness of the Girls Active programme across the school, particularly among staff.
- To organise a transition event for local feeder primary school students on site utilising the GLAMS as role models and leaders to allow the primary school students to become familiar with the school, the staff and each other to reduce their anxieties of transiting to the school in September.

Activities
The activities across the two years include the following:

Year 1: The GLAMs worked with their teacher to create a film (available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JsFSX_Q0oC0) based on the ‘Like a Girl’ Video created by Always. This showed the girls interviewing staff and a montage of girls participating in several of the activities available to girls within the school. The GLAMs presented this film in a full school assembly to every girl in the school. The GLAMS also developed questionnaires, targeted towards girls that they knew didn’t enjoy PE or who didn’t come to extra-curricular clubs, to find out their preferences for physical activity. As a result, the school ran extra-curricular clubs for girls to take part in football and rugby. Killicomaine JHS achieved a ‘Highly Commended’ award in the Outstanding Secondary School category at the Youth Sport Trust Conference for their Year 1 Girls Active work.

Year 2: The school now has a Staff Activity Profiles Noticeboard on display in the girls’ cloak rooms. The GLAMS interviewed teachers about their participation in physical activity outside school. This helped to raise awareness of the GLAMS and the project among staff, as well as setting an example to pupils of staff involvement in sport. This noticeboard also has information and contact details for local sports clubs encouraging participation outside of school also. Extra-curricular clubs have run again in girls’ rugby and football in the summer term, and girls’ badminton has also been added to the mix since January. A table tennis club was also set up in the summer term with a number of girls completing their Introduction to Table Tennis Leadership Award and have since gone on to support this club. All extra-curricular activities are well marketed regularly on the KJHS Sport Facebook page. As part of the transition event run by the school for smaller primary schools, 3 activities (netball, hockey and
volleyball) were put on for the girls to give them a taster of the sports available at Killicomaine. The GLAMS introduced themselves and encouraged the girls to get fully involved in the day. They took groups of girls round each of the activities and continued to encourage them throughout. The girls were mixed in different groups from different schools to help to develop friendships prior to them starting school in September.

**Section 3: Impact**

**Impact**

**Participants - Extra-Curricular Clubs:**

- **Attracted the hard-to-motivate non-active girls** – the extra-curricular clubs have pulled in girls who don’t normally participate in school sports. Badminton has allowed some girls who are not team sports players to find a sport that they enjoy and are good at. Rugby and football both hold appeal for girls who are not involved in the school’s traditional team sports, especially as the clubs are run on a very open basis – they know that it doesn’t matter whether they’re ‘good’ or not, it’s about having fun.

- **Friendships and life-skill development** – the clubs have encouraged girls to mix with each other across classes/academic streams, building new friendship networks and helping the girls develop life-skill around teamwork, communication and the ability to get on with anyone they meet. The girls have appreciated the opportunity to get to know their peers in a different environment, outside the classroom, and to share with each other an activity that they love doing.

- **Confidence building** – those participating in rugby and football especially have welcomed being able to engage in sports that are traditionally seen as ‘for boys’; this has increased their confidence, and although the clubs are not run on a competitive basis, taking part in sports where everyone is on an equal footing (compared to some of the more traditional sports), has encouraged them to express their competitiveness in a ‘safe’ environment.

- **Enhanced the overall school experience and self-esteem** – the clubs have helped to alleviate pressure on some of these girls, by giving them positive reasons to come to school, and opportunities to participate in something which they enjoy and are good at. This has improved their self-esteem and helped them deal with challenges they may be facing elsewhere in their school life – socially or academically.

- **Built responsibility/commitment to others** – the clubs also demand commitment from those who participate and the girls have come to understand the responsibility they have to their team mates and teachers, and the value of organising their time so that they can attend the club each week etc.

**Participants – Transition Day:**

- **Building friendships** – the transition day worked well as a way of helping girls from smaller primary schools meet each other and build friendships through engaging in sport together before they transition to the school.

- **GLAMS development opportunity** – the GLAMS developed leadership skills through their involvement in the day – organising the groups of primary school students, leading some of the hockey drills with the primary girls, liaising with teachers and setting a good example to the younger girls. During the course of the day some of the GLAMS found themselves participating in sports they might not normally play and enjoyed showing the primary school students that it’s good to try something new. Through their involvement in the range of Girls Active activities, and having to speak to and work with staff, the GLAMS have built their confidence in interacting with adults. Acting as role-models for the rest of the school, they have developed an understanding of why some girls don’t play sport and have actively tried to encourage them (e.g. by running alongside slower girls in cross-country or picking more mixed teams in PE lessons) and to demonstrate the benefits of physical activity. The GLAMS have also gained from working together in a group – building skills in negotiating and working with others and giving them the confidence to speak out across all areas of their life.
Staff/Wider School:

- **Increased awareness of Girls Active and the PE department’s work** – receiving the award from the Youth Sport Trust has provided a tremendous boost for the PE department and the GLAMS. The school is very proud of their achievement and of being recognised at a UK wide level. Staff respect the hard work that Mrs Hillis and the GLAMS have put in to win this award and Girls Active is now known across the school by staff and parents. The staff noticeboards have also helped to raise the profile of Girls Active among staff and mean that staff are now much more aware of who the GLAMS are and what they do.

- **Reinforced the school’s commitment to PE** – it was encouraging to include sports as part of the schools’ transition day activities. It helped to showcase the school’s commitment to girls’ PE to parents, other staff/schools and to establish a positive attitude towards physical activity amongst the new intake of girls.

**Section 4: Sustainability and Top Tips**

**Sustainability**

The intention is to run the extra-curricular clubs next year on a similar basis. Mrs Hillis has a number of other plans that she would like to pursue next year, which include:

- **More involvement from other staff** – Mrs Hillis is keen to involve more staff in the running of the programme, and therefore would like to set up a regular staff activity session to encourage team-building and establish an ethos of sports engagement through all levels of the school.

- **To run a more extensive transition event** – involving a wider range of schools, and possibly also involving parents and staff to help new pupils and their families to build connections at the school and ease the girls transition. Mrs Hillis believes that organising a social event around physical activity would be a fun and appealing way to do this.

- **A broader mix of girls as GLAMS** – during the first 2 years the GLAMS have been some of the more ‘sporty’ girls as Mrs Hillis was keen for them to act as role models, but she thinks it will be valuable to now include some less sporty girls, to bring a different perspective to the group, and also to give these girls the opportunity to benefit from working as a GLAM.

- **Plans for more extended outdoor pursuits** – targeted towards Year 9s and 10s who aren’t engaged with PE to give them the opportunity to experience a range of different activities, and to mix with their peers and teachers outside of the school environment.

**Top Tips**

- **Develop external partnerships** – some of the extra-curricular clubs have been delivered in partnership with Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Ulster Rugby and Table Tennis Ulster and supported by local clubs such as Portadown Rugby Club and Craigavon Table Tennis Club. The Council also helped provide coaches for the transition day. This has been a significant element in the success of these events and helps lessen the burden on teachers.

- **Target transition events towards smaller feeder schools so that girls can benefit from developing friendship networks before coming to the school** – Mrs Hillis had to scale back her initial plans for the transition event, as these were relatively ambitious for the first year of having a transition focus. The school normally runs 4 different transition days for different primary schools. For logistical reasons the Girls Active transition activities could only take place on one of those days – when the smaller schools visit – and needed to fit around the standard transition activities for that day. In the end this worked very well as it allowed girls from these smaller schools to mix and meet others whom they will see again in September. As discussed, next year Mrs Hillis hopes to run a dedicated sports transition event which would be open to all primary school pupils coming up to the school.
• **Keep providing a new challenge to maintain momentum** – as this was the school’s second year of Girls Active, Mrs Hillis was keen to focus on keeping the momentum going and the transition event helped by providing a new challenge.

• **Target gaps in the sport schedule for extra-curricular clubs** – finding the right time in the school year to run the extra-curricular clubs is a challenge. Mrs Hillis is busy with hockey, volleyball and netball clubs and team practices/matches between September and March; Year 10s sit their main exams in March; athletics and tennis are a major focus for March, April and May. But the final 6 weeks of term tends to be easier and this is when the girls’ football and rugby clubs have run for the last two years. This works well. Badminton club now runs in the morning before school which participants enjoy as it provides a positive start to the school day.

### Section 5: Permissions and Supporting Information

#### Approved quotes

**Teacher:**
“Sport helps you to mingle, it’s something fun, you don’t even have to have a conversation with the others, but it means there’ll be some familiar faces next year when they come to Killicomaine.” [transition event]

“The GLAMS have done a great job at talking to the girls who don’t enjoy sports and showing them that there are people out there who want you to enjoy sport.”

“Doing these clubs means there are mixed girls in the group, girls they might not normally be friends with and so they develop that lifelong skill of getting on with anyone, communicating and encouraging and telling the others ‘well done’.”

**GLAMS:**
“It’s opened my eyes and made us realise that there are lots of girls who feel insecure about doing sport. We’re so fortunate that we’re confident, so now we try to help them a bit more. We explain why they should do it and hopefully they see us doing it and see us confident and enjoying it.”

**Participants:**
“When you play sport together you get to know more about a person and you think they might actually be a good person to be friends with. And you’re doing something you love doing, together.”

“Girls rugby is just different, not a lot of girls do it and it’s good to give people an equal chance to do things… it makes you feel more confident to be doing something that is typically for boys.”

“Going to the club after school means you don’t worry so much about your academics. It gives you another reason for coming to school.”

#### Consent to share

Rebecca Hillis, PE Teacher, Killicomaine Junior High School

**Date of case study**

4th July 2018
Section 1: Project Overview

CASE STUDY
Engaging Girls in Physical Activity using GLAMS and a Health and Activity Workshop

School: St. Patrick’s Academy, Lisburn, NI
Project: Year 1 of Girls Active

Section 2: Project Rationale

Rationale
The PE teacher, Miss Beirne, sets out to ensure that all girls participate in PE/physical activity. She tries to provide PE lessons and extra-curricular activities that are as varied as possible to maximise the opportunities for girls to find something they enjoy doing. Nevertheless, she is conscious that in Year 10, around age 14, girls’ participation tends to drop off due to increasing self-consciousness and body image pressures. She hoped that Girls Active would help more girls from this age group to engage with PE by offering some different activities that the school might not otherwise have access to. She was also interested in stretching her learning and understanding of how to engage girls who are less interested in physical activity and hoped that involvement in the programme would be a source of inspiration and new ideas for approaches she could take.

Aim
- To encourage greater engagement with PE/physical activity for girls at the school, particularly in Year 10.
- To provide fresh input into PE teaching at the school and allow girls to try varied activities that they might not otherwise have access to.
- For teachers and GLAMS to collaborate and organise a Health and Wellbeing event to emphasise the importance and relevance of physical activity for girls health, wellbeing and their daily lives.

Activities
There have been 3 main activities within the Girls Active programme at the school:

1) The GLAMS put together a noticeboard featuring staff from the school, with the title “If we can do it... So can you!”. This featured staff from across the school who are involved in sport or physical activity. The GLAMS interviewed the staff members and wrote up a short paragraph about the physical activity they are involved in; this was put up, together with a photo of the staff member participating in that activity.

2) The GLAMS helped to design a new PE kit for girls at the school which will be introduced in the new school year. The new kit looks and feels more modern; it uses different materials and includes a more fashionable, fitted top. It is hoped the new PE kit will encourage girls to feel more positive about their PE lessons.

3) The school ran a Health and Activity Workshop Day, which was delivered to all girls in Years 8, 9 and 10 – about 70 girls in total, which was supported by the Sport Development team at Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council. The aim was for the day to be holistic – linking health and wellbeing, physical activity and social media. The girls came to school in sports clothes for the day and took part in 3 different activities across the morning: pilates; a glow in the dark sports session, and a motivational workshop. In the afternoon, there was a workshop around the role of social media in encouraging healthy lifestyles. The pilates and glow in the dark activities were delivered by Everybody Active coaches from Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and the GLAMS helped with the organisation on the day, helping the groups to move between the activities, and ensuring the coaches had everything they needed for the day to run smoothly.
Section 3: Impact

Impact

Participants:

- **Encouraged positive connections between staff and pupils** – the noticeboard activity helped to break down barriers between staff and pupils and open up conversations around physical activity.

- **Opportunity for girls to experience different kinds of physical activity** – the workshop day was very successful and created a real buzz in the school. Girls were excited about taking part and enjoyed trying activities which wouldn’t usually be available to them. Glow sports was particularly successful because of the novelty of the activity and due to the fact that the activities were carried out in the dark with neon lights, therefore reducing the barriers around body image and confidence. Many also enjoyed Pilates and were surprised by how physically demanding it can be. The teacher felt the day successfully demonstrated to the girls how varied physical activity can be, challenging the association with ‘traditional’ PE sports such as netball or athletics and giving them ideas for activities they could do outside of school; the day also provided an opportunity for the PE teacher to talk about different kinds of activity that are available. As a result, a number of girls explored classes available to them locally, with a handful of girls joining up and still regularly attending.

- **Greater awareness of health and wellbeing benefits** – during the motivational workshop delivered by Youth Sport Trust, the girls were asked to find their personal reasons for being active and to pledge how they would be more active moving forwards, thereby increasing their awareness of the importance of physical activity for their health and wellbeing.

- **Potential for social media to be a force for good** – the social media workshop encouraged girls to think differently about how they use social media. Girls considered the health risks that social media can pose, particularly around self-confidence and body-image and then looked at how social media might work as a positive resource to provide inspiration, support and a way of positively supporting each other.

- **Development opportunity for GLAMS** – the GLAMS benefitted from the leadership roles they took on, gaining a sense of achievement and growing in confidence as a result of participation; this was particularly so for one girl with low self-esteem, who was able to stand up and speak in public with the other GLAMS. The GLAMS gained a better understanding of the challenges the PE staff face in encouraging participation in physical activity across the student body, and understood that they have a role to play in encouraging their peers to be active. The PE teacher felt encouraged and inspired by the enthusiasm shown by the girls on the day; she was pleased to have the opportunity to provide activities that these girls would not normally have access to.

Staff/Wider School:

- **Engendered positive atmosphere across the school** – staff across the school noted the positive atmosphere that the workshop day brought to the school and some were surprised at how much all the girls committed to, and enjoyed, the day. Miss Beirne believes this has helped to demonstrate to the staff body the positive impact that physical activity can have on girls’ motivation and attitudes to school.

- **Helped to create a greater sense of equality around provision of girls’ sport** – boys PE is well-developed in the school, with boys playing a lot of matches because of the availability of other school teams. Girls Active has helped to develop recognition of girls’ sport and physical activity within the school and has demonstrated the value of giving girls opportunities to participate in physical activity.

- **Supporting and encouraging PE staff** – the programme has helped Miss Beirne in her aims of providing inclusive sports for girls. She has been encouraged by seeing the impact of the first year of participation and is keen to continue involvement and to make a difference to the lives of as many girls as possible.

Section 4: Sustainability and Top Tips

Sustainability
• **Challenge of building on the progress made** – the PE teacher acknowledges there is a challenge in sustaining interest and activity levels for the longer-term. She has followed up with some of the girls who said they’d like to join local classes to check they’ve done this and acknowledges that having an impact, even on a small number of girls, is a good start.

• **Listening to what girls want and need** – listening to the girls and making visible changes based on their opinions, for example to the PE kit, has helped empower the girls as they know their voices are valued and can effect real change. Miss Beirne is looking forward to seeing girls in the new PE kit from September and hopes this will make a difference to attitudes towards and participation in PE lessons. Some girls felt uncomfortable in the previous PE kit so it is hoped the new, modern PE kit will help reduce these barriers.

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**Top Tips**

• **Support from external providers** – lack of time, resources and timetabling restrictions are real barriers for teachers when trying to develop new programmes and events. Asking others for support and forming links with external providers (coaches, volunteers, clubs, councils) that can share some of the workload can help to ensure activities are achievable and sustainable.

• **Identify staff who are happy to help with preparation and at the event itself** – staff support on the workshop day was vital to the success of the event and a number of staff came forward in response to requests from Miss Beirne and the GLAMS which helped considerably with preparation for the day and delivery of the activities.

• **Be realistic about what you can achieve; set pragmatic goals** – the teacher stresses the importance of setting achievable goals for the programme, especially during the first year, and of being pragmatic about what difference you can make in the space of a year. She reports that, at the start of the year, the scale of what she wanted to achieve with Girls Active had felt quite daunting. By focusing on a couple of small changes/projects, together with one flagship event or activity, she was able to move forward, support the GLAMS and have an impact on a small number of girls. She hopes that, as the programme builds, the impact will widen, but feels that this has been a positive first year.

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**Section 5: Permissions and Supporting Information**

**Approved quotes**

**Teacher:**

“We’re a small school so we don’t have a lot of money to try different things or do new stuff, so this gave me an opportunity to do something with the girls that I could never have done otherwise. I could never have run such a good day for so many pupils.”

“It’s a really valuable opportunity for schools to take part in, and definitely worthwhile.”

“The other teachers were really impressed to see the girls taking part and going for it. I think the rest of the staff appreciated what sport can do.”

“You want to make a difference to everyone, all the girls, so you set yourself high expectations, but you have to have a bit of realism about what’s achievable in just a year.”

**Consent to share**

Nicola Beirne, PE Teacher, St Patrick’s Academy

**Date of case study**

26th June 2018