LET’S GIVE ALL YOUNG PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTY THE OPPORTUNITY TO FULFIL THEIR POTENTIAL THROUGH A HAPPY AND ACTIVE LIFE.”

DR AKHEEM ALI - PE2020 LAUNCH
WHY IS WELLBEING IMPORTANT FOR TODAY’S YOUNG PEOPLE?

We are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of improving wellbeing among young people. Low levels of wellbeing in children are associated with poor health, loneliness and increased involvement in ‘risky’ behaviours, while high levels of positive wellbeing is much more likely to lead to positive life chances in adulthood.

Wellbeing is vital within school life, with a direct link between a greater sense of wellbeing and young people’s attainment. In our research, 1 in 4 secondary aged students in Northamptonshire do not feel they lead a purposeful and meaningful life and nearly the same proportion of young people do not feel positive about their future. The issues for schools is that if their education environment is facilitating a decline in the wellbeing of pupils, this has the potential to hinder achievement and attainment.

As students get older, their wellbeing tends to decline. Our research in Northamptonshire schools showed a general decline in wellbeing and physical activity levels by year group, with the decline most prevalent among girls. This can be due to issues related to transition from Primary to Secondary school, exam pressures, bullying, reduced body confidence and lower levels of physical activity. This, together with a reduction in the time spent being active and taking part in physical education, means we are creating a perfect storm around the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of young people today.

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3Baseline survey n=3771
THE AIMS OF PE2020 ACTIVE HEALTHY MINDS

Between September 2015 and July 2017 the Youth Sport Trust (YST) implemented the PE2020 Active Healthy Minds approach across secondary schools in Northamptonshire. The aim of the programme was to use PE and sport as a vehicle to improve physical, social and emotional wellbeing of adolescents and positively impact on young people's achievement. To meet the desired outcomes, the programme provided a universal, targeted and integrated offer across the secondary schools engaged:

1. Professional development and training programme available to PE teachers to use the PE curriculum to build personal/ life skills in young people through the PE curriculum.
2. Offering schools specialist YST programmes which support social and emotional development of young people, and implementing these programmes to targeted groups within each school (e.g. girls, SEND, young people affected by exam pressures).
3. Working with senior leaders within the school and community stakeholders outside the school to ensure the delivery of resources and learning was integral to other strategies and programmes being offered to young people aged 11-18.

WHAT WAS EVALUATED?

The programme evaluation was carried out by the University of Northampton in order to assess the impact of the multi-component approach. To evaluate the short-term outcomes of the programme on young people aged 11-18 in Northamptonshire, a number of wellbeing indicators were measured among secondary school students via an online survey. These outcomes included changes in:

1. Wellbeing (particularly in relation to happiness, purposefulness and life satisfaction)
2. Physical activity levels and motivation
3. Character skills and life skills
4. Experience of school life

INTERVENTION REACH

To achieve the desired outcomes, YST introduced a number of interventions into the schools as part of the overall approach. Some schools engaged in one intervention only, while other schools engaged in multiple interventions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention (see page 14 and 15 for description)</th>
<th>Schools engaged</th>
<th>Students engaged</th>
<th>Teachers trained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My Personal Best</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8,400*</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get to the Start Line</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising Aspirations Increasing Resilience (RAIR)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Health Champions</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls Active</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1,350**</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>10,320</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*SEND: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
*Baseline survey n=3771/follow up survey n=1642/matched sample n=777
**Girls Leadership and Marketing Squads (GLM4s)
CREATING NETWORKS AND BUILDING LOCAL CAPACITY

In order to ensure the effective delivery of YST interventions and the sustainability of the PE2020: Active Healthy Minds approach there was dedicated time to build capacity locally and to develop a workforce in Northamptonshire.

RECRUITMENT AND DEPLOYMENT OF 5 HEAD TEACHER AMBASSADORS

A NETWORK OF 8 SCHOOL-BASED WELLBEING CHAMPIONS

DEVELOPMENT OF A SPECIAL SCHOOLS NETWORK OF 8 SCHOOLS

15 NEWSLETTERS AND COMMUNICATIONS TO SCHOOLS

DELIVERY OF 8 PE2020 EVENTS, INCLUDING WORKSHOPS AT NATIONAL CONFERENCES AND HEADS OF PE LEARNING EVENTS

KEY OUTPUTS

CHANGES TO WELLBEING

67% of students who reported their wellbeing had changed* said it had improved.

Students had good knowledge and understanding of wellbeing and attributed this knowledge to being in receipt of opportunities such as ‘positive education lessons’ which were delivered in the programme period and facilitated by PE2020 through the ‘My Personal Best’ intervention.

Qualitative data suggested that a significant proportion of students perceived that their wellbeing had improved during the programme period. Changes to wellbeing were attributed to psychological changes (e.g. confidence), cognitive changes (e.g. goal setting ability), emotional changes (e.g. kindness and empathy), intellectual changes, social changes (e.g. more or fewer friends), health behaviour changes (e.g. nutritional adaptations) and external changes (e.g. home and school life).

Quantitative data suggested wellbeing decreased over time in line with expected national trends but that the PE2020: Active Healthy Minds approach contributed to slowing the natural decrease in wellbeing over time. PE2020 therefore helped by playing a protective role in enabling students to have to feel in some control of their own wellbeing.

Physical activity should be encouraged as a mechanism to cope with many difficult life circumstances. Future programmes should develop interventions that support the maintenance of physical activity among groups already engaged in physical activity, and encourage physical activity uptake and maintenance among individuals and groups that are less active (e.g. females and older students).

KEY FINDINGS

*29% of students (n=476) reported changes in relation to wellbeing
Quantitative student data suggests that engagement in PE, sport and physical activity did not change over time. However, the relatively stable engagement levels between pre and post survey indicates that PE2020 contributed to halting a decline in participation that might be expected to occur naturally over the course of an academic school year.

Moreover, qualitative student data suggests that many students perceived an increase in their own physical activity levels during the programme period. Increases were attributed to physical activity provision through the PE2020 programme and supported increased exposure to physical activity opportunities. Increases were also attributed to increases in life responsibilities that require increases in physical activity, indicating circumstances outside of the school context plays an important role in physical activity engagement levels.

In qualitative data a significant proportion of students perceived that their life skills had improved during the programme period. Changes to life skills were attributed to psychological changes (such as self-confidence), creativity, social changes (making and losing friends), cognitive changes (such as improvements in increased maturity), intellectual changes (such as becoming smarter), and behaviour change (more involvement in activities (sporting and other).

The interventions offered within the PE2020 programme recognised the pressures and challenges that students face and may experience beyond the course of their school life. These interventions offered mechanisms to cope with stress and adversity and to facilitate the development of core life skills, suggesting PE2020 contributed to increasing students' perceived life skills.

Schools should be encouraged to integrate the development of life skills into curricular subjects rather than deliver standalone topics. This can serve to equip students with the characteristics and skills they need for life beyond school that the current Progress 8 subjects don't provide.

*49% of students (n=821) reported perceived changes in relation to physical activity levels

*28% of students (n=457) reported changes in relation to life skills
4 CHANGES TO EXPERIENCE OF SCHOOL LIFE

59% of students who reported their experience of school life had changed said changes were positive.

Results from qualitative data indicated that students perceived predominantly positive changes in the experience of school life, with a small number of negative changes.

Perceived changes in attitudes to school life were attributed to changes in students’ attendance, grades and behaviour, psychological changes (such as confidence and autonomy), wider behavioural changes (such as uptake of physical activity sessions), social changes (friendships), and school environment changes (feelings of safety, provision of resources).

The PE2020 programme and respective interventions (such as Get to the Start Line, My Personal Best, Raising Aspirations and Increasing Resilience) helped to play a protective role in enhancing the overall experience of and attitudes towards school life, and reducing the number of students reporting declines in attitudes to school life due to life challenges faced.

RECOMMENDATION

School-based interventions should continue to support the prevention of challenges which may affect attitudes to school life (e.g. bullying), and the provision of support to respond to students who perceive declines in attitudes and experiences towards school life.

35% of students (n=572) reported perceived changes in relation to experiences of school life

CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation of the PE2020 programme provided emerging evidence of positive impact, with qualitative results indicating largely health and wellbeing constructs.

The findings suggest that the programme may have been protective in:

- Reducing declines in physical activity engagement that may occur during the course of school life and possibly among different demographic groups.
- Enhancing attitudes to school life and increasing development of core life skills.
- Empowering students to improve their own wellbeing.

The research highlights a wide range of factors experienced by school age students which can influence physical activity engagement and motivations to engage, life skills development, body image perceptions, experience of and attitudes to school life, and quality of wellbeing.

These factors should be considered in the development and implementation of health and wellbeing programmes, to overcome barriers to health and wellbeing improvement and/or to account for variations in attainment of programme outcomes.

The school environment plays a pivotal role in shaping the health and wellbeing of school students. Health and wellbeing programmes and interventions, such as PE2020, should continue to maximise the opportunity to utilise the school environment to support and enhance the health and wellbeing of young people.
Programme case study – Get to the Start Line

Get to the Start Line uses high profile athletes to create behaviour change in relation to physical and emotional wellbeing. The targeted intervention uses the athletes’ experiences of managing pressure situations and developing strategies to alleviate the stress and anxiety during performance; exactly the same sort of pressure young people face when preparing for exams.

The programme seeks to help young people build confidence and achieve their potential working on these strategies, working with athlete mentors and using physical activity as a release from school related stress.

Impact and Key Successes

- Overall reduction in number of referrals for the vast majority of the pupils involved in the programme.
- Improvements in academic attainment (students involved in the programme performed at the same level or better than expected in their GCSE exams).
- Reductions in exam-related stress and anxiety for some students, and in turn enhanced their wellbeing.
- Increased understanding and normalisation of exam-related stress and anxiety affecting young people.
- School champions viewing their involvement in the programme as an effective form of professional development.
- Played a protective role in developing techniques/strategies to assist students in feeling less stressed/anxious.

School case study - Moulton School

One method of the PE2020 evaluation was to produce a bespoke report for Moulton School and Science College near Northampton covering 300+ students (of which approximately 20% were targeted students) completing both pre and post surveys.

- Those students who were involved in PE2020 activities identified improvements in psychological health, academic performance and life skills at the follow up assessment phase (beyond baseline assessment scores).
- For these students, increases in wellbeing and enjoyment of PE were reported. These students also identified additional improvements in academic performance (attendance, behaviour, grades) and increases in perceived life skills (creativity, aspiration, resilience, empathy, confidence).

Many pupils found the programme enjoyable and appreciated the school offering support. The programme was specifically targeted at helping them manage stress and anxiety and they particularly enjoyed the practical activities and group activities/discussions within the programme with a positive view of the style of the intervention and the support of a school champion.

BEING INVOLVED IN PE2020 WAS A FANTASTIC OPPORTUNITY WHICH OUR STUDENTS THOROUGHLY ENJOYED. PUPILS ENGAGED IN BOTH PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL BASED TASKS WHICH ENHANCED THE STUDENTS’ UNDERSTANDING OF RESILIENCE AND ASPIRATION.

AS A RESULT, THESE STUDENTS HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY DEMONSTRATED A HIGH VALUE TOWARDS BEING RESILIENT AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ASPIRING TO BETTER YOURSELF.**

TREVOR JONES, HEAD TEACHER
CAVEATS FOR THE REPORT

Funding cuts were incurred by the PE2020: Active Healthy Minds programme that had an adverse effect on the evaluation framework including a reduced number of post survey responses. The programme evaluation was originally designed to use multiple data collection methods (e.g. surveys, interviews, classroom discussions, group walks and diary blogs) with multiple stakeholder involved in the programme (e.g. students, teachers, head teachers). This data would enable a range of perceptions to be captured about the programme and its implementation, in order to evidence the effectiveness of the programme.

However, only pre and post survey data were able to be collected, limiting the range of perspectives captured to evidence the impact of the programme. Future evaluations would benefit from a mixed design with multiple stakeholder groups. Therefore, the evaluation could not assess the effectiveness of the discrete interventions within the strategy. Nevertheless, some qualitative data within the evaluation indirectly reported on the impact of some interventions.

DESCRIPTIONS OF INTERVENTIONS

1 GIRLS ACTIVE

Girls Active supports schools to understand what motivates girls to take part in physical activity. It enables teachers to work with the girls to make the necessary changes to their physical education (PE), sport and physical activity provision. This programme is developed by the Youth Sport Trust, and delivered in partnership with This Girl Can and Women in Sport.

We developed Girls Active as the result of our work with 20 secondary schools through a 12-month pilot aimed at tackling the negative attitudes that girls have towards their body image, improve their attitude towards PE, and leadership – to make the necessary changes to their physical education (PE), sport and physical activity provision. This programme is developed by the Youth Sport Trust, and delivered in partnership with This Girl Can and Women in Sport.

2 YOUNG HEALTH CHAMPIONS

Young Health Champions are Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils that have an interest in leading healthy active lifestyles and are passionate about making a difference to the health and wellbeing of their peers. These pupils can come from pupil voice groups, Sports Leaders, School Sport Organising Committees, Young Ambassadors, Student Council and House Captains.

The intervention supports young people to develop their knowledge and understanding of key health issues affecting them today through an accredited Level 1 training programme and to develop their skills through promoting healthy active lifestyles to their peers in school to improve their health and wellbeing and in turn achieve better in school.

3 GET TO THE START LINE

Get to the Start Line is a package of support to help students build confidence, manage their physical and emotional wellbeing and achieve their potential in school exams.

The initiative supports progress and attainment across the whole school and tackles declining emotional wellbeing and resilience to enable young people to manage stress effectively.

Through the use of high profile athletes, Get to the Start Line aims to create a behaviour change in young people. It utilises athletes’ experiences of managing high-pressured situations and developing strategies to alleviate stress and anxiety. From a recent national pilot, it was found in a majority of cases there were reduced referrals to school-based wellbeing services, and a majority of pupils improved on their predicted GCSE grades.

4 RAIR: RAISING ASPIRATION AND INCREASING RESILIENCE

This involves the creation of a group of RAIR Champions within a school who play a role in developing a culture of aspiration where young people have the resilience to overcome challenges that they will face on their journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With thanks to the following members of staff for contributing to the PE2020 programme and respective evaluation:

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