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Interim Evaluation of Active Across Ages: Executive Summary

September 2019

Produced by YST Research and peer reviewed by Professor Andy Jones at the University of East Anglia



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Executive Summary

Introduction

Active Across Ages is funded by Youth Sport Trust International and Sir John Beckwith Charitable Trust. It is delivered by the Youth Sport Trust (YST) and aims to develop and deliver an action-based research project focussed on intergenerational activity inspired and facilitated through the power of play and sport. The key aims of Active Across Ages are to:

- Facilitate social mixing to promote social wellbeing
- Enhance physical and mental wellbeing
- Boost social action and social capital
- Establish credible and impactful models of intergenerational activity for future use

Active Across Ages is delivered across five discrete geographical locations across the country. Each location has a lead school and a partner school, and schools have identified at least one older person's setting to partner with for the project. Young people from the schools are trained as Activity Buddies and then work with the older people to deliver activities, with a focus on physical activity, that both the old and young can enjoy together. The project is running from December 2018 to February 2020.

An evaluation of Active Across Ages is being conducted by YST Research and is being peer reviewed by Professor Andy Jones at the University of East Anglia; this executive summary presents the interim evaluation findings.

About the Research

The interim evaluation has been informed by surveys completed by the Activity Buddies (133 surveys completed at the start of the project, 127 surveys at the end of the training, and 93 surveys at the interim stage of the project), seven case study visits which included consultations with key staff members, Activity Buddies and older people, plus key reports submitted by the schools (project plans and progress reports).

Project Activities

At the time of reporting, all schools had started to deliver activities with the older people. Most schools are delivering weekly sessions with the older people. However, in some cases, Activity Buddies are on a rota, for example attending the activities once a fortnight or once a month, rather than every week. Many of the activities are taking place at the older person settings, although three schools have also hosted activities at their premises. The activities have been varied but are typically low-level physical activity.

Project Reach

As of the end of July 2019, key figures relating to project reach are as follows:

- 10 schools participating
- 10 teachers trained
- 127 Activity Buddies trained
- 776 hours of social action undertaken
- 10 older person settings participating



Benefits

Young People

The key benefits to young people taking part in Active Across Ages are as follows:

Activity Buddies agreed that Active Across Ages has helped them.....

75%

...to improve their skills

69%

...to feel happier

85%

...to feel like they were doing something valued by others

68%

...to feel more confident taking part in physical activity

97%

...to spend more time with older people

"I am lonely outside school and I only do stuff with my family. This was the best day I have had at school and I am going to be a leader when I leave school"

"I never thought the older people could teach me so much"

"It's all humbling and warms you in a way. You're now the role model, getting looked up to – it changes you to be like that, you act responsibly and give it more."

Quotes from Activity Buddies

Practitioners and Schools

School leads that were interviewed reported how being involved with Active Across Ages had increased their confidence, along with awareness and desire to be involved with intergenerational projects in the future. For the majority of schools, Active Across Ages has enabled new partnerships to be formed with older person settings. A small number of schools already had a relationship with the older person setting but, in these cases, Active Across Ages has helped to strengthen these partnerships.

"We value what it [Active Across Ages] can offer. We have shown that it is valuable to do it and therefore it will continue."

(Lead Practitioner)

"I was proud to be part of a wonderful day and my residents were all on a high afterwards. It promoted lots of engaging conversation throughout the afternoon once home."

(Deputy Manager, Care Home)

Older People

At the interim stage, the biggest observed benefit for the older people participating in Active Across Ages has been an increase in their overall social wellbeing. The project has enabled older people to form new relationships and social connections with young people. All stakeholders reported that the older people participating seemed happier and energised with life. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that there has been a gradual increase in the amount of movement that the older people are doing.

"I've been totally surprised by children in general – they are so fresh. I've seen how good children of this age are; we're in safe hands for the future."

(Older Person)



Review of Project Delivery to Date

97% of young people rated Active Across Ages as 'very good' or 'good'. Meeting older people and helping other people were the aspects they liked most about the project. Lead practitioners also reported that there has been an overwhelming positive attitude towards the work that they are doing as part of this project.

Emerging Best Practice

At the interim stage of the research, the following best practice indicators for successful project delivery have emerged.

Emerging Best Practice

1. Ensure there is a lead member of staff in the school and the older person setting
2. Allow sufficient time to plan the project in advance
3. Carefully consider the location of the activities
4. Carefully consider who to recruit as Activity Buddies
5. Allow flexibility to ensure the project is delivered within the local context and complements local priorities
6. Support the Activity Buddies and manage expectations
7. Tailor the activities to suit participants' interests and abilities
8. Ensure that project momentum is maintained
9. Build on early benefits that emerge
10. Showcase project activities to demonstrate impact



Conclusions

To date, Active Across Ages has been extremely well received by all involved. A wide range of people, young and old, have taken part in the project, which highlights its versatility and inclusive nature.

It has taken time to build the partnerships between settings and plan the activities so project activities took longer than expected to start. Notwithstanding this, a range of benefits have been experienced to date, including improving people's views of other generations, increased confidence, improved social wellbeing, enhanced mental wellbeing, and strengthened partnership working. The young people are at the heart of this project and are the key success factor. In addition, the flexibility of the project to allow delivery to be tailored to participants, to reflect local contexts and to complement other priorities, is a real strength.

In some schools, Active Across Ages has provided the catalyst to kick-start intergenerational work and in others, it has given intergenerational work a greater status and profile to allow schools to further develop some earlier engagement in this area. Emerging findings suggest there is an appetite in all settings to continue to deliver intergenerational activities beyond the lifetime of the project. Going forward, showcasing the activities, and associated benefits, will be key to raising awareness and securing buy-in from wider stakeholders.

YST RESEARCH

The Youth Sport Trust (YST) is a national children's charity passionate about creating a future where every child enjoys the life-changing benefits that come from play and sport. YST Research offers research, analysis, insight and evaluation services to organisations with an interest in the wider children and young people's sector. Our research expertise is focussed on improving the wellbeing of children and young people through sport and physical activity.

Our specialisms include:

- Education, PE and school sport
- Community sport / clubs
- Early years settings
- Life skills and employability
- Activism and volunteering
- Health (physical, social and emotional)

By working with us, you are supporting us to achieve our mission to improve children's lives and their future.

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