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Evaluating Sport and Physical Activity Interventions
A guide for practitioners

Dr Lindsey Dugdill & Prof. Gareth Stratton
The Chief Medical Officer’s (DH, 2004b) recommendations for public health are that adults participate in “a total of at least 30 minutes a day of at least moderate intensity physical activity on five or more days a week.” For obesity prevention it is recommended that adults participate in 45-60 minutes of at least moderate physical activity each day. Children are recommended to accumulate at least 60 minutes of daily, moderate to vigorous physical activity. The Department of Health has a joint public service agreement with the Treasury, the Department for Education and Skills and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS, 2002) to halt the year-on-year rise in obesity among children under 11 by 2010, in the context of a broader strategy to tackle obesity in the population as a whole. Sport England is contributing to the CMO’s physical activity recommendations by enabling adults to do 3 x 30 minutes of sport and active recreation per week (with a 1% year-on-year increase until 2010). Progression towards these targets are being measured through the Active People Survey (Sport England 2005-2006). School children should be receiving 2 hours of physical education and school sport per week by 2010. The Active People Survey showed that only a fifth of adults achieved 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport or active recreation on at least three days a week and data on children are unclear and patchy.
Evaluating Interventions

Evaluation is made up of a number of progressive steps, the most important of which is the collection of appropriate data that is subsequently used to make a judgment about the value of an intervention. The evidence from an evaluation should enable practitioners to produce more effective interventions for participants. An evaluation should measure progress towards meeting the expressed aims and objectives of an intervention. Also, as the resources and skills available for evaluations are often limited, a choice of what to measure and why should be taken early on in the evaluation process. Thus if an intervention aims to increase the number of people walking in a park, then counting the number of walkers around the park using an observational tool and a representative sampling period (morning, midday, afternoon and evening on week and weekend days) would suffice.

Evaluation should always be seen as an integral part of the process of intervention design – especially new interventions, however, it is important to choose methods and type of data carefully. An appropriate evaluation should instigate improvements in intervention effectiveness or aid intervention sustainability. Furthermore it is also useful to create a framework around evaluations as more than one evaluation may be required by an organization (local authority, PCT etc.) at any one time.

An Example of an Evaluation Framework: RE-AIM

The RE-AIM framework (for more detail see: www.re-aim.org) is perhaps a useful way for practitioners to think about structuring their evaluation.

- Reach - Who did the intervention reach? - e.g. monitoring of participant numbers through registers, post codes, questionnaires, facility usage
- Effectiveness - How effective was the intervention at meeting its aims and objectives? - e.g. physical activity increase, decrease in body mass index or increasing the contemplation to become physically active.
- Adoption - Have significant parts of the intervention been adopted elsewhere? - e.g. exercise referral interventions have been adopted by most local authorities in the UK
- Implementation - How was the intervention implemented and managed? How was the intervention funded. What skills did the staff have?
- Monitoring: What were the monitoring and evaluation strategies used to assess the quality of the intervention? Is the intervention sustainable?

This framework also allows a reporting structure to be used between partnerships. Thus if 10 sport / physical activity interventions were in operation in one neighbourhood, each would report against the 5 RE-AIM sections allowing an overall report to be constructed using the RE-AIM headings.
STAGE ONE Planning

Evaluation should measure all of the phases. Outcome evaluation alone is not sufficient as it does not explore the reasons why an intervention has been successful. We must ask what, how and why a sport/physical activity intervention is successful if the evaluation is to be meaningful.

In addition to the stages illustrated in figure 1 well-designed evaluation studies should follow a series of principles of good practice outlined below. Monitoring and measuring should receive as much thought as designing the physical activity intervention. The best way to consider this is to understand that each time there is an action there is evidence to collect. This evidence can be collected, collated and disseminated at various stages:

- Needs analysis stage (formative evaluation) of the planning cycle informs the strategic development of physical activity programme action planning.
- Process evaluation gives evidence as to the effectiveness of the planning and implementation phases of the intervention.
- Impact evaluation describe the immediate benefits at the end of a health intervention.
- Outcome evaluation describes longer term effects and attempts to examine the sustainability of the intervention.
- Dissemination (reports following RE-AIM framework).

STAGE ONE Planning

Stakeholder involvement and participation - evaluation should be carried out by a team who represent all stakeholder views. A balance between insider (management) and outsider involvement (consultants, academics) in evaluation is the ideal and can help keep the balance between subjectivity/objectivity and rigorous practice.

Needs analysis - helps prioritise issues in conjunction with stakeholders:
✓ it begins the evaluation cycle and provides baseline data
✓ it can establish the organisation or intervention's view and philosophy
✓ it identifies related problems/issues that exist and why
✓ it identifies current good practice but also gaps in provision
✓ it determines which issues are priorities for different sectors of the population
✓ it helps to establish how and when to intervene
✓ it sets up links with different groups and encourages participation

Clarifying aims of the intervention - stakeholders can use the needs analysis to decide on priorities for action, intervention aims and goals and implementation delivery.

Setting evaluation objectives - this involves several stages:

1. Deciding the evaluation questions - once the aims and objectives of the evaluation are decided it should be reasonably straightforward to clarify the questions that the evaluation will address. Clarity at this stage can ensure that only relevant, rather than redundant information is collected.
2. Choosing appropriate indicators - indicators chosen to reflect stakeholder agendas will produce data of real interest and this is more likely to lead to action as a result.
3. A balance of process, impact and outcome indicators are required to avoid a focus on short-term impacts rather than longer-term outcomes. To be effective, evaluation should have a balanced range of all indicators. For instance, failure of an intervention may be due to the manner of implementation rather than the content of the intervention - only process indicators will detect this. Short-term impact measures are important to give participants and stakeholders a view as to the progress being made and can keep people engaged with the process. Outcome measures help to identify if an intervention is still on track at a later time and whether change has been maintained or not. The boundaries between process, impact and outcome indicators can become blurred particularly with ongoing interventions due to the cyclical nature of action, evaluation and reflection can overlap. This is where structuring a number of intervention evaluations according to an evaluation framework (for example RE-AIM) can give direction to multiple interventions aimed at increasing activity levels.

Other factors influencing evaluation design
✓ Target group e.g. age, gender, disability
✓ Seasonality, climate
✓ Geographical location of intervention e.g. rural, urban
✓ Resources, skills for evaluation
✓ Current policy supporting health practices
✓ Environmental, cultural and socio-demographic issues.

In addition to the stages illustrated in figure 1 well-designed evaluation studies should follow a series of principles of good practice outlined below. Monitoring and measuring should receive as much thought as designing the physical activity intervention. The best way to consider this is to understand that each time there is an action there is evidence to collect. This evidence can be collected, collated and disseminated at various stages:
**Stage Two**

**Measurement**

It is important to choose a measurement method appropriate to the evaluation question and type of intervention. A variety of research methods could be employed to gather “layers” of data on a topic which can be cross referenced to each other to add validity and rigor to the evaluation. Measuring process, impact and outcome will normally entail the use of both quantitative and qualitative data.

**Gaining Ethical Approval**

There are a number of key principles that describe ethical protection when measuring physical activity (Krioton, 2006). The most important aspect of ethical evaluation is voluntary and informed consent by participants aged 16 years and over. For participants under the age of 16 (or vulnerable adults) assent from both the participant and parent/carer is required. Participants must receive an information sheet outlining the type(s) of research methods to be used, the time required, alterations to normal routine and potential recompense for participation.

All participants have the right to withdraw from the evaluation aspect of the intervention without penalty and without reason. Data should be treated in accordance with the data protection act (DH 2001). Guidance on NHS research ethics can be found on the National Research Ethics Service (NRES; www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk). (N.B. An advanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check is required to work with children and vulnerable adults).

**Requirements for Ethical Approval**

**Application for approval of an investigation for Research and Evaluation involving Human Subjects**

Here the project title is stated along with its aims. The details of the project are outlined along with procedures including a statement about the originality of the project and how it will benefit participants or society. Statistical or content analyses should also be included and related to clear hypotheses or research aims.

**Confidentiality of Participant Records**

This requires a signed statement by the research team stating that they will adhere to the principles outlined in the Data Protection Act.

**Form of Consent to take part as a Subject in a Research Study**

A form of consent for the participant: that should also be signed by a disinterested third party. This should include a short paragraph about the aims of the project.

**Participant Information (PI) Sheet**

The PI sheet should state “the exact nature” of involvement required of the participant.

**Risk Assessment Form**

The RA form needs to clearly establish the nature of the hazard, likelihood of injury occurring and procedures taken to minimise the risk. This may need to be signed by a relevant health and safety officer.

**NHS Research Governance Proforma**

When NHS staff or patients are involved the Local Ethics Research Committee (LREC) will also require an application if NHS staff or patients are involved in any phase of the research. These are usually organised by PCTs or NHS trusts.
Measuring Sport and Physical Activity

There are a variety of methods available for measuring sport/physical activity levels but there is no gold standard (Welk, 2002). Key parameters for physical activity measurement include frequency (when/how often does it occur), intensity (how hard is the activity), time (the duration) and type of activity (walking, running, swimming etc.). There are over 30 methods available for measuring physical activity and their practicality or feasibility of use is illustrated in figure 2. The challenge is to choose the most valid, accurate and reliable tool (or portfolio of tools) to measure physical activity within your intervention. (N.B. A valid instrument measures what it purports to measure, whereas a reliable instrument quantifies the degree to which a measure produces stable and repeatable results when used under the same conditions). The choice of a measure depends on a balance between feasibility and cost against validity (complexity and expense). Diaries, self reports (questionnaire), pedometers, heart rate monitors, accelerometers and systematic observation tools move from high feasibility to low validity and low feasibility to high validity. The key issue here is one of practicality and realism. In most cases self-report and pedometers will be the most practical option. Greater expertise and support would be required for more complex evaluations.

Self-report (questionnaire) Tools

The development of an appropriate, valid and reliable questionnaire to measure physical activity is a challenging task. Physical activity for health benefit comprises several components (e.g. intensity, frequency, duration, and type) that can be performed in different domains (e.g. occupational physical activity, transport physical activity, and/or physical activity during discretionary or leisure time).

Self-report tools are probably the most common choice of measuring tool because they are affordable and have low participant burden. Self-report can be used in a number of formats such as diaries, questionnaires (interview, self administered or proxy-administered, e.g. where parents may report on the activity of their children). Self report is influenced by the ability to comprehend a survey question and to recall activity patterns and hence, the most reliable tools tend to be 3 day or 7 day recall (physical activity participation over past 3 or 7 days). These self-report tools are recommended as they have adequate reliability and validity in large populations (Welk, 2002). Some of the most widely used questionnaires are the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ), and the tool used in the Active People Survey (www.activepeoplesurvey.com). Population self-report of sport and physical activity has been inconsistent across the UK. Various tools have been used to gather data and all use slightly different measurement parameters (making trend analysis difficult) and methods (e.g. Health Survey for England, 2003; Active People Survey, 2005).

Active People Survey

The Active People Survey used a specially developed questionnaire (telephone interview survey) to provide base line measurements (2006) in order for Sport England to monitor sport and active recreation Regular participation in sport and active recreation is defined by Sport England as taking part in moderate intensity sport and active recreation on at least three days a week (at least 12 days in the last 4 weeks) for at least 30 minutes continuously in any one session. Participation includes recreational walking and cycling. In the North West region, 20.6% of the adult population took part regularly in sport and active recreation (national average = 23%). Twenty seven per cent of people in the North West built some sport or activity into their lives, whereas 52.4% of adults did not take part in any moderate intensity sport and active recreation of 30 minutes duration in the last 4 weeks. (www.sportengland.org/active_people_results). Professionals can register to use the Active People Diagnostic (APD) tool to find information on sedentary levels, recreational cycling and walking, sport and recreation participation and volunteering (www.activepeoplesurvey.com). Whilst it is important to note that the APS only records sport and recreation activity that lasts for over 30 minutes they provide the most up to date data on baseline participation rates in sport and active recreation. The APS does not assess occupational, household, gardening or transport-related physical activity (unless walking and cycling as a form of transport is a part of a healthy lifestyle choice).

International and Global Physical Activity Questionnaires

IPAQ: www.ipaq.ki.se (IPAQ): www.who.int/chp/steptools/19FAQ) One of the most widely used self-report (telephone or self administered) tools is the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ), of which there are short and long forms. Both forms include an assessment of walking, and moderate and vigorous physical activities (MVPA), and are recommended as a viable method of monitoring population levels of physical activity globally for populations aged 15-69. Some authors have found over reporting of physical activity by the IPAQ (Rzewnicki et al., 2003) whereas there is conflicting evidence on its reliability which has been reported as poor (Ruten et al., 2003) and acceptable (r=8). Low criterion validity results were found between IPAQ and an accelerometer (Craig et al., 2003) whereas Ekelund et al. (2006) found similar criterion validity scores for the short IPAQ, suggesting that the specificity to correctly classify people achieving 30 minutes of physical activity per day was sound. In summary the IPAQ was not initially designed for research and evaluation purposes or in small scale interventions. However Ekelund et al’s findings suggest that it is possible to use the long version IPAQ to identify people who achieve activity guidelines (30 minutes per day). Therefore it is our view that the long version IPAQ can be used for evaluation purposes and in representative samples (further guidance is available at www.ipaq.se). Technical expertise may be required with the cleaning and analysis phases of IPAQ use.
Comparing the IPAQ and GPAQ

The GPAQ (2nd version) is very similar to the long version of the IPAQ. Both assess frequency, duration and intensity of physical activity. The IPAQ includes MET values of 3.3, 4.0 and 8.0 for walking, moderate and vigorous activity respectively whereas the GPAQ only includes the 4.0 and 8.0 MET values. The IPAQ requires respondents to recall physical activity over the past 7 days compared to a “typical week” in the GPAQ. The GPAQ has 15 questions in three domains (work, travel, recreation) and is validated for use in 16-84 year olds compared to 25 questions across 4 domains in the IPAQ (job, transport, domestic/gardening, recreation) which is validated for use in 15-69 year olds. The GPAQ data can also be cleaned and analysed using free public health analysis software (www.cdc.gov/epiinfo) Recently the GPAQ has been selected as the tool for the physical activity element in the North West Public Health Observatory lifestyle questionnaire.

Physical Activity Questionnaire for Older Children and Adolescents (PAQ-C/A)

The Physical Activity Questionnaire for Older Children (PAQ-C) and Adolescents (PAQ-A) are validated (Crocker et al., 1997), self-administered, 7 day recall questionnaires, which assess general levels of physical activity in 9 to 15 year old children. There are no valid questionnaires for children under the age of 9.

IPAQ and GPAQ and PAQ-C/A are examples of a number of forms of self-report or interview administered questionnaire. Many others can be found in a special edition of Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise: A Collection of Physical Activity Questionnaires (Pereira et al., 1997).

Accelerometry and Heart Rate Monitoring

Accelerometers and heart rate telemeters provide objective measures of physical activity and will be discussed together. It is unlikely that practitioners will use these because of the cost, technical expertise required for use and the complexity of data analysis. Nevertheless a brief explanation of these monitors and a case study will be described here.

Heart Rate Monitoring

Heart rate monitoring usually uses a telemetric system (http://www.polar.fi/) with a transmitter which comes in the form of a belt and fits around the chest and detects electrical impulses from the heart and converts these to beats per minute. These data are either stored in the belt or transmitted to a receiver in the form of a wristwatch. Heart rate telemeters can be programmed to record heart rate second to second or minute to minute (recording interval is called an epoch) continuously for weeks.

Accelerometry

Accelerometers (www.theactigraph.com) are small box devices usually placed on the waistband (on the wrist in wheelchair users) which record the vertical (uni-axial) or vertical, horizontal and diagonal (tri-axial) acceleration of the body. These accelerations are subsequently converted to gravitational counts per epoch duration. These instruments can record in second by second or minute by minute epochs.

The main advantage of heart rate monitoring and accelerometry is the relatively low participant burden and the relative ease by which data can be collected and more importantly analysed. Both heart rate telemeters and accelerometers are first initialised in conjunction with their respective software programmes when names, monitor numbers and start and end recording dates and times are set up for each individual. On completion of data collection the instruments are interfaced with a PC and data downloaded. Data can then be analysed by frequency, intensity and time and patterns of activity assessed across each minute of the day (www.theactigraph.com; www.polar.fi/polar/channels/uk). Data produced by heart rate and movement methods is extremely valuable and is not beset by problems of recall, although most studies also use objective methods alongside a diary which requires participants to record getting up and going to bed times. For example high heart rates at unusual times may be recorded in a diary and allow the evaluator to interpret the results with greater validity (e.g. heart rate may be elevated due to stress rather than physical activity).
When is it best to use heart rate telemetry and accelerometry?

From a practitioner perspective, heart rate telemetry and accelerometry may be most useful when a precise quantification of physical activity is required e.g. in a Tai Chi for Arthritis Class (PA Audit, 2005, Salford LA.). These methods could also be used in exercise referral or any other structured intervention. Data from the instruments would then be downloaded from a relatively small number of participants and the activity contribution of the intervention analysed and reported. In one study (Rogers et al., 2005, 2006) activity levels were monitored in primary school playgrounds using both heart rate and accelerometry. This was entirely appropriate as the physical activity had a clear focus (play), it occurred in one setting and involved a group (young children) whose accurate recall of the frequency, intensity, duration and mode of activity is generally problematic. Moreover, the data could be analysed by discrete time periods across a school morning or lunch break.

Systematic Observation

Systematic observation involves a trained observer coding predetermined physical activity behaviours (sitting, walking, running) in various settings (playgrounds, parks, homes etc.) undertaken by participants over set time intervals. McKenzie has designed a number of systematic observation systems and some methods are (SORT-A, SORT-F) are available on the internet (www.rohan.sdu.edu/faculty/sallss/measures.html). One of the most comprehensive instruments to assess walking/cycling is the SPACES system (Systematic Pedestrian and Cycling Environmental Scan, Pikora et al., 2001). Systematic observation requires specific training of observers and data collection methods be undertaken live or by reviewing video media. This technique is extremely time consuming and should only be used on small groups in specific settings. Systematic observation tools are accessible for practitioners as they provide powerful data by combining both context and behaviour.

Recent Technologies (GPS, Mobile Telephones)

Recently, geographic position system (GPS) and mobile phone technology have been proposed as tools for physical activity measurement. The Nokia 500 Sport (www.techtgeist.tv/2006/05/nokia_5500_sport) has a pedometer integrated into the phone and can also be used to develop physical activity interventions. Sending prompt SMS messages to participants enrolled on interventions to remind them to walk at lunch break or to take the stairs and not the lift is also a good way of promoting physical activity in a cost effective manner.

Example: In an unpublished pilot study 2 focus groups of 3 participants discussed the physical activity behaviour with an intervention lead. Each participant signed up to some simple behaviour change agreements. The intervention lead was allowed to send daily SMS texts to remind them of the behaviour changes. Examples of these were an early morning breakfast SMS to walk to work and/or take the stairs not the lift. In addition SMS messages stating, “put your pedometer on” or “text me your total steps count” at the end of the day were also used. Data were then entered into a spreadsheet by hand and analysed at the end of the physical activity prompting intervention.

The Garmin System (www.garmin.com/products/foreunner201/) is a GPS monitor that detects outdoor activity and geographic positioning. The GPS system is useful for calculating distances and speeds as well as the location of activity. The integration of the software with appropriate software also allows mapping of activity. The limitations of GPS is that it only works outside and in areas where there is no interference (cloud cover, trees, high rise buildings) as at minimum. GPS can be used with activity diaries and accelerometers.

Example: Tracking the use of a skate park by adolescents. Participants agreed to wear the GPS system whilst outdoors before and after the introduction of a skate park in their neighbourhood. The data from the GPS system provided evidence of the geographical location of the skateboarders, their distance travelled and speeds attained not only whilst at the venue but also during the travel to and from the venue. Usually GPS are combined with heart rate monitors or accelerometers and qualitative data from focus groups, interviews or photographs of locations.

Cognitive and Psycho-social Measures

Control over exercise and physical activity (Kerner and Grossman, 2001), enjoyment of exercise (Keminska and De Carlo, 1993), cost benefit (Marcus et al., 1992), intention to exercise (Kerner and Grossman, 2002), self efficacy (Sallis et al. 1998) and social support (Sallis et al., 1987) also represent other health markers susceptible to change as a result of participating in an activity intervention and are worth considering for use within physical activity interventions.

Physical Environment Measures

There are many useful measures of physical environments relevant to physical activity. The Neighbourhood Environment Walkability Scale (NEWS, Saelens et al., 2003), Home Environment Scale (Sallis et al., 1997), Perceived Environment Scale (Bail et al., 2001), Awareness of Physical Activity Facilities Scale (Leslie et al, 1999), and Personal, Media, External Environments and Local Opportunity Scales (Stahl et al., 2001), are readily available and often there are appropriate tools for practitioners to use in their evaluation.

Abstracts on cognitive and psycho-social and physical environment measures are available from www.pubmed.org or by contacting the authors direct.

Other Outcome Measures

Changes in physical fitness scores, height, weight, body mass index (BMI) and pedometer measures, blood pressure, run/walk times, weight lifted, flexibilities and ratings of perceived exertion may also be useful evaluation measures within specific interventions such as exercise and physical activity monitoring. However, it allows enough focus for the evaluation design, purposes and outcomes of the intervention under investigation. Focus groups (Morgan and Krueger, 1998) are a type of group interview, usually comprising about 8 people, which allow very specific questions to be explored. These are a useful tool to measure ongoing processes during an intervention, or as a reflective tool to look back retrospectively on an experience of an intervention.

Interviews: One-to-one, Focus groups

Interviews are useful for tracking and exploring complex issues. A semi-structured interview format is often the best approach as it allows enough focus for specific questions to be asked by the evaluator however. It allows enough scope for the interviewee to give free-ranging opinions on the intended benefits and outcomes of the intervention under investigation. Focus groups (Morgan and Krueger, 1998) are a type of group interview, usually comprising about 8 people, which allow very specific questions to be explored. These are a useful tool to measure ongoing processes during an intervention, or as a reflective tool to look back retrospectively on an experience of an intervention.

Image-based techniques: Videos, video diaries, disposable cameras

Images are increasingly being used to measure health-related behaviour as they allow the reality of the ongoing behaviour to be captured (Bauer and Gaskell, 2001). They can be also be used by the participants themselves and hence provide an insider perspective on an intervention. Pictures and images are a powerful mechanism for getting participants to reflect on their behaviour and can also be used as a trigger for a focus group conversation. Drawings (e.g. Draw and Write method) are a useful tool to use with children to engage them in the research process and overcome language barriers.
Stage Three
Data Analysis:
Data should be organised according to the type of response.

Qualitative analysis - if qualitative responses are generated then these will need to be coded. Coding is where similar thematic areas arising from within the textual evidence (interview transcript) are grouped together e.g. all factors relating to barriers to physical activity could be grouped as one thematic area. Coding allows patterns within the data to be defined and described. This data can be organised by a paper-based or electronic method (N-VIVO; www.qsrinternational.com). Key points for respondents will be recorded from which themes related to activity behaviour will emerge.

Quantitative analysis - When handling quantitative data a spreadsheet or database (Excel/Access/Epi Info tool;www.cdc.gov/epiinfo) will have to be designed, into which the data can then be inputted. From this, statistical analyses can be performed, and general descriptive statistics produced (means, ranges, standard deviations) on the outcome measure (physical activity). These data may be related to sub groups (sometimes called independent or grouping variables) such as gender, age, SOA (Super Output Area-Post Code). Any use of data should conform to the Data Protection Act (Superv Output Area-Post Code). Any use of data grouping variables) such as gender age, SOA (Super Output Area-Post Code). Any use of data should conform to the Data Protection Act

Stage Four
Dissemination:
In order to ensure action results from the evaluation it is vital that all data collected during the evaluation is analysed, interpreted and disseminated in an appropriate and timely manner.

Recent use of geographic information systems (GIS) may enable some data to be mapped. Some data may be released in the short-term to keep interest maintained. Ensure results are summarised in a succinct and meaningful way, statistics are fully explained and qualitative findings kept brief. A balance of both positive and negative aspects should be highlighted. Examples of good practice such as case studies, qualitative quotes or photographs may enrich the results and make the summary more interesting.

Case Study 1 (figure 3)
The Liverpool Sporting Playgrounds Project
Figure 3 reviews the Liverpool Sporting Playgrounds Intervention in the “stages of evaluation” model.

Needs analysis
Children’s activity during school play was low. Thus a major initiative was developed by the DfES and Nike. Schools in deprived areas applied for £20k funding to redesign their playground. Twenty one schools received money to do this. Partners involved in the study, such as the Sport Action Zone (SAZ), the Youth Sport Trust (YST), local education authority (school improvement officers), local authority architects and schools councils (teachers, pupils, parents, governors) were involved in discussion regarding the nature of playground redesign and the research approach.

Process evaluation
There were regular meetings held with architects, school councils, Youth Sport Trust, Sport Action Zone manager and the school improvement officer and research team. Evidence gathered using semi-structured interviews and notes from conversations and meetings as well as systematic observation (video) data from the school playgrounds permitted a detailed analysis of the process of change and implementation.

The Stages of Evaluation: The Liverpool Sporting Playgrounds Project

Summary Findings
The result of this rigorous evaluation was that children’s activity was increased and sustained for between 6 and 12 months. This resulted in all primary school in the unitary authority receiving funding to renovate their school playgrounds.

Interpreting data using RE-AIM
Because the data generated the programme will now “reach” all children, it “effectively” increased physical activity. All schools are “adopting” the basic intervention design. “Implementation” lessons have been learned and added to the process. “Monitoring” demonstrated a significant effect and the continued need for evaluation.

Outcome evaluation
Activity levels increased by about 4 percent in boys and girls although over half of this was vigorous activity. This increase was sustained 6 months after the intervention although effects dropped off after 12 months post intervention. The intervention effect was independent of gender, BMI category and age. Longer play duration had an additional positive effect on activity levels. Children, teachers and parents were proud of the playground and children were more alert in class. There were some difficulties in constructing some of the playground designs.
Case Study 2: Stepping Out LEAP (Local Exercise Action Pilot) Evaluation:

An exercise promotion project aimed at people aged 50+ in Wigan borough. The evaluation study aimed to assess the impact of a variety of primary-care led, exercise interventions, targeted at the 50+ population in Wigan borough, on exercise behaviour. “Stepping Out” was one of ten LEAP (Local Exercise Action Pilots) demonstration projects in England. A range of interventions were implemented including a marketing and communication campaign, community outreach programme, senior peer mentoring, ‘Steps to Health’ exercise referral scheme, ‘Next Steps’ activity opportunities, Healthwalks, falls prevention and ‘Moving more often’- targeting activities in social care settings.

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<td>Process and implementation measures</td>
<td>The proportion of people attending the programme event; % of health professionals participating; The programme was delivered as intended; Environmental changes were carried out as planned; Inter-agency planning / partnerships maintained and are maintained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximal effects</td>
<td>Individual level measures</td>
<td>Awareness of PA health benefits; Cognitive changes such as self efficacy, intention to be more active, beliefs; Social supports enhanced; Social influences; social environment; social capital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme sustainability</td>
<td>Community level change</td>
<td>Physical environmental measures</td>
<td>Changes to physical environment implemented/completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme derived policy</td>
<td>Other (non PA) outcomes</td>
<td>Reduced disease incidence or mortality from inactivity-related conditions; Improved well-being/ quality of life/ social capital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: A Review of the Whole Evaluation process
Summary of evaluation process

Figure 4 overviews the evaluation process and distinguishes projects into complex and descriptive designs. Descriptive evaluations involve straightforward analysis and reporting of data. In descriptive designs numbers/percentages of participants, quotes from interviews are reported whereas complex designs involve more advanced statistical content analysis of quantitative and qualitative data respectively.

In descriptive evaluations expertise within your organization or partnership may be sufficient whereas for complex designs, external support and expertise may be required. Table 2 (Bauman et al. 2006) reviews the whole evaluation process.

References


Physical activity measurement:-

www.ipaq.se (accessed 4/3/07) 
Pedometer labels (3,500 kilocalories of food energy = 1 pound of body weight) 
1 Kcal = 4.2 KJ (Kilojoules) 
Kilocalorie 
MET (standard metabolic equivalent) 
One MET = the energy (oxygen) used by the body whilst sitting quietly. Activity intensity can be presented in METS. 
∑ Any activity that burns ≥ 3 METs is considered moderate-intensity physical activity. 
∑ Any activity that burns > 6 METs is considered vigorous-intensity physical activity. 
M moderate-intensity physical activity 
M ≥ 3-6 METs or 3-7 kcal_min-1. 
Weight-bearing physical activity 
Physical activity that moves a load or has impact on the skeleton (such as jumping or skipping). 

Physical activity is any bodily movement done to improve or maintain physical fitness. 
Household physical activity 
Household physical activity includes a large number of domestic activities such as washing, gardening and cleaning. 
Inactivity 
Inactivity is not engaging in physical activity beyond daily functioning. Sometimes used interchangeably with sedentary (sitting) activity such as watching television, sitting and reading. 
Kilojoule 
The amount of heat required to raise the temperature of 1 kg of water 1° C. Kilojoule is the ordinary calorie discussed in food or exercise energy-expenditure tables and food labels (3,500 kilocalories of food energy = 1 pound of body weight) 
1 Kcal = 4.2 KJ (Kilojoules) 
Leisure-time physical activity 
Leisure-time physical activity is exercise, sports, recreation, or hobbies that are not associated with activities as part of one’s regular job duties, household, or transportation. 
MET (standard metabolic equivalent) 
Any activity that burns > 6 METs is considered vigorous-intensity physical activity. 

Vigorous-intensity physical activity may be intense enough to cause breathlessness and significant physical effort: ≥ 6 METs or 7 kcal_min-1. 

Appendix 1. 

Glossary 
Cardiorespiratory fitness (also called aerobic endurance or aerobic fitness) 
Cardiorespiratory fitness is the ability of the body’s circulatory and respiratory systems to supply fuel and oxygen during sustained physical activity. 
Exercise 
Exercise is physical activity that is planned or structured. It involves repetitive bodily movement done to improve or maintain physical fitness. 

Validity 
Validity determines whether the research measures that which it was intended to measure. Validity does not imply reliability. 
Reliability 
Reliability is the “consistency” or “repeatability” of the measures being used. 

Activity intensity 
Activity intensity can be presented in METS. 

Physical fitness is a set of attributes a person has in regards to a person’s ability to perform physical activities that require aerobic fitness, endurance, strength, or flexibility and is determined by a combination of regular activity and genetically inherited ability. 

Reliability 
Reliability is the “consistency” or “repeatability” of the measures being used. 
Reliability does not imply validity. 

Physical activity measurement:– 

Pedometers 
walking.about.com/cs/measure/tp/ 
pedometer.htm 
www.polygondirect.com accessed 4/3/07) 
Physical activity assessment for health-related research. 
Human Kinetics; 

Physical activity 
Physical activity is any bodily movement done to improve or maintain physical fitness. 

Triangulation 
Triangulation is the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. (See: www.tele.sunyit.edu/traingulation.htm for further detail) 

Validity 
Validity determines whether the research measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful and trustworthy the results are. Valid measures are reliable measures 

Vigorous-intensity physical activity 
Vigorous-intensity physical activity may be intense enough to cause breathlessness and significant physical effort: ≥ 6 METs or 7 kcal_min-1. 

Inactivity 
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