



Children in the City case study: United Kingdom

BACKGROUND

What? Children in the City is a project created by the World Heart Federation (WHF) in partnership with UEFA to improve access and awareness of physical activity in children (7 to 12 years old) living in selected low-income urban neighbourhoods across Europe.

Why? Physical inactivity is one of the major modifiable risk factors for cardiovascular disease, responsible for approx. 30% of all deaths in the UK and around the world. Setting healthy habits early in life is essential to stay

healthy, and being active in big cities can be challenging –almost 80% of British children do not reach WHO recommended levels of physical activity¹. The project has been designed to better understand the reasons for physical inactivity in children, and show that cost-effective, simple solutions can make a difference.

Who? Children in the City is implemented in partnership with WHF national members and partners - in the UK, the British Heart Foundation and StreetGames.

When and Where? Children in the City has been run in 3 cities in 2015 (London, Leicester and Wigan).

How? Through the organization of 3 multi-activity festivals introducing a variety of sport and activities to children and their parents, and a campaign to raise awareness on physical activity.

APPROACH, BARRIERS AND DRIVERS

A large number of studies into the barriers to physical activity have already been conducted in the UK, and many campaigns and projects are being implemented to improve the level of physical activity in children. To avoid any duplication and maximize the impact of this project, a review of the available evidence and a consultation with local experts took place in 2014 (instead of the survey on barriers to physical activity as in most of the participating countries).

Based on this review, three key barriers for physical activity have been identified:

- **Lack of information** about the activities available, and their diversity.
- **Lack of confidence**, mostly due to the importance of the performance over the fun and inclusive aspect of sport.
- **Social inequalities**, as children from low-income areas have far less access and less 'know-how' about how to be active.

The following drivers and opportunities were identified:

- **Knowledge and access:** make parents and children aware of the variety of activities available close from their home and school, with a focus on low-income neighbourhoods.
- **Sport for everyone:** encourage children - including the least fit and active - to try a variety of new activities and find one they love, with an emphasis on the fun aspect of sport regardless of the level of performance.

61% of the participants surveyed during the festivals said they learned something new about different ways to be active

¹WHO recommends that children and youth aged 5–17 should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily.



KEY ACTIONS & ACHIEVEMENTS

Three one-day, multi-activity festivals were organized in different neighbourhoods across the UK.

Key aspects included:

- **The festivals** took place in public locations such as parks, to be easily accessible to people living in low-income areas.
- **They provided taster sessions** for a wide range of sports – football, pop-up tennis, martial arts, dance, badminton, table tennis, climbing, hula hoop, wheelchair basketball, etc.
- **The festivals** also offered some arts and craft activities, playgrounds, inflatable activities and other non-traditional and informal sporting activities, more likely to appeal to inactive children.
- **Information stands** on healthy lifestyle were available, including some with health checks and advice on healthy eating.
- **Local sport clubs, health organizations and authorities were involved** to offer the sport taster sessions and the information stalls. Children and parents could easily find information on where to practice the activity just tested in their neighborhood, and sign up with some of the clubs directly - with the objective of children taking up regular sport in their community after the fun days are over.
- **A survey** was run during the festivals, asking participants to evaluate the event, share what they learned as well as information on their level of physical activity, and estimate the impact of the festivals on their future behaviours.

39% of respondents said they learned about new places where they could be active

● **Spotlight: Future intentions**

To capture the impact of the festivals on attitude and behaviours, we asked children if the festival encouraged them to be more active in the future, and 66% responded positively. 83% of parents said they were likely to do new things to support their children to be more active following the festival.

Legacy: The data collected through the event and follow up surveys suggest that the festival encouraged children to engage in new activities and be more active longer term. This tendency seems confirmed by responses from the 47 activity providers present at the festivals (running stalls and delivering activities): they collected 746 email addresses of parents interested in their activities, and although it cannot be fully attributed to the festivals, nearly half said attendance had generally increased since the events.

“It was an excellent event. The various activities were really good as it gave the children a better understanding of different sports available”



- Over 14'000 participants
- 97% of positive feedback from participants
- 63% of the children attending not sufficiently active

- **The festivals were promoted** through a communications and social media campaign.
- **A follow up survey** was conducted with parents 3 months later. The limited number of responses doesn't allow to build significant conclusions, but shows very positive tendencies with 60% of parents saying their child(ren) had taken part in new/different activities since attending the event, and 80% saying they increased their activity level.

CONTACTS & LINKS

Access the full reports, surveys, pictures & material on: <https://goo.gl/9J3E2y>

World Heart Federation: communications@worldheart.org

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