

**cities
for better
health**

MOVE
FOR FUN



UNITED KINGDOM 

Innovative and inclusive sessions in primary schools

Move For Fun is a global pilot programme funded by Novo Nordisk and developed in partnership with the International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA) and Danish sports association DGI, alongside other partner organisations in pilot countries. Move For Fun is designed for children between the ages of six and 12 who would benefit from being more physically active, with a focus on working in vulnerable communities.



Bringing physical activity to children in vulnerable urban areas

High engagement and sustained motivation were achieved by giving the children a strong influence over activity and sports.

There are currently seven million children between the ages of five and 15 in England, and more than half are not doing the recommended daily amount of exercise.¹ The Chief Medical Officer in England recommends that children do at least 60 minutes of activity every day, yet this is not the case for the majority of young people.¹

Physical Education (PE) lessons are typically part of the curriculum in English schools. However, a survey found that 38% of teachers have noticed a decrease in their PE programmes since 2012, as more time is being devoted to core subjects.² Unfortunately, children from low-income families tend to have the lowest levels of physical activity,³ and stubborn differences between ethnicities, sex and levels of affluence remain.⁴

Manchester and Leicester are cities in the North West and Midlands of England, respectively. These cities have vibrant and diverse populations, encompassing individuals from various cultural backgrounds. Consequently, a multitude of languages are commonly spoken within the cities' communities. The proportion of schoolchildren from minority ethnic groups exceeds the national average.^{5,6}

Areas of Manchester and Leicester experience levels of social, economic and health deprivation, and the proportion of children living in poverty is higher than the national average for England.^{5,6} The proportion of children in both cities leaving primary school (age 10–11) with overweight or obesity is higher than the national average.^{5,6}

Social and health indicators for Manchester, Leicester and the national average (England)

	Leicester ⁶	Manchester ⁵	England average ^{5,7}
Children living with overweight or obesity at the start of primary school (age 4-5)	21.4%	23.9%	22.3%
Children living with overweight or obesity at the end of primary school (age 10-11)	40.8%	43.8%	37.8%
Schoolchildren from minority ethnic groups (2022)	76.8%	67.4%	35%
Children living in poverty (financial year ending 2021)	28.3%	32.5%	18.5%

Implementing partner Youth Sport Trust International

The Move For Fun pilot in the UK is being delivered with support from Youth Sport Trust International (YST-I). YST-I is a UK-based sport for development charity working globally to improve the lives of children and young people through play, physical activity, physical education and sport.

YST-I draws upon the experience of Youth Sport Trust, a renowned UK charity working in the areas of young people's education and development through sport and play. Youth Sport Trust has more than 25 years' experience of running inclusive and innovative programmes.

Pilot approach

YST-I initially collaborated with seven primary schools, providing teacher training and support for implementing Move for Fun in school lessons, at break times and after school.

Move For Fun in the UK was piloted through schools chosen for activation based on their capacity to reach children experiencing social and economic deprivation. From the outset, the programme was designed with a strategic approach in mind. This meant evaluating what else was being offered in the schools and in the surrounding area. It was deemed important not to duplicate an offering that was already available.

“Being really clear about how the programme was going to reach the maximum number of disadvantaged children, being really flexible and having a good local coordinator were prerequisites for a successful implementation,” explains Helen Vost, managing director, YST-I.



Spotlight on implementation Leicester

YST-I had established relationships with Leicester City Council and Leicester City School Sport & Physical Activity Network (SSPAN). The health, well-being and community manager of Leicester SSPAN facilitated the introduction to the schools and the initial briefings with teachers and staff.

Three schools were initially selected for implementation, and one school was activated in the first phase. Located in inner-city Leicester, Catherine Infant School works with some of the most vulnerable children in the city. Around 80% of children at the school have an Indian heritage, and approximately 50% of children start school not being able to speak English.

There are no parks or recreational areas nearby for children to enjoy. Due to various factors, children seldom venture outside their homes, and are often restricted to just visiting the corner shop. The challenges faced by children in this area have been further worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. A significant rise in social isolation among children, particularly boys, starting the infant school has been observed. This is often accompanied by increased levels of obesity and a lack of fundamental motor skills.

Spotlight on implementation Manchester

Schools in the city of Salford (within Greater Manchester) were approached through Salford City Council. The partnership manager of School Sport Partnership in Salford facilitated the introduction to the schools, as well as the initial briefings with teachers and staff.

The schools in Manchester created a wide variety of interventions, with different levels of outside coaching, depending on the activity. The children were given a significant role in selecting the activities, which helped contribute to sustained high engagement.



Overview of Move For Fun pilot programme in the UK

City	Age of children	Activity description	Participants invited	Led by
Leicester	6	Twice-weekly play and movement lunchtime sessions	Young boys with worrying health and lifestyle issues	Lunchtime supervisors
Manchester	8–11	A range of activities changing week to week for a targeted group of children	A targeted group	
Manchester	8–11	Flag football	Girls who do not get involved in other physical activities	External coach
Manchester	9–11	Water polo	Those who would benefit from cardiovascular fitness and the opportunity to work as a team	Teacher
Manchester	7–10	Activities to promote team building, communication and self-esteem	Young people displaying mental health issues	Teacher
Manchester	7–10	30 minutes of cardiovascular and team activities every day	Children showing signs of obesity and poor nutrition and health from challenging family backgrounds	
Manchester	8–11	Movement skills and cardiovascular games and activities	15 of the most at-risk young people	

Results

300
children

participating in weekly Move
For Fun sessions

12
schools

participating by August 2023,
up from 7 schools the year
before

25
children

per session (rounded
average, not exact per class)

60%

At the beginning of the programme, 60% of children reported being either motivated or very motivated to join in with sport and physical activity.

80%

At the end of the programme, 80% of children reported being either motivated or very motivated to join in with sport and physical activity. None reported not being motivated.

What the children say

"I like playing the games with my friend."

Oscar

"I like being on a team."

Miran

"I can catch a ball now."

Betty

What the parents say

"This is great. It's wonderful to see my daughter so involved in the activity."

A mother at the Salford school
water polo session

What the teachers say

"One of the things that's coming out strongly is the togetherness and sociability aspect.

Because the activities have been chosen together, there seems to be a greater connection between the children, and it's lovely to see boys and girls working together when, normally, they would stay in more single-sex groups."

School teacher

*"Although the city strategy is extensive, it hasn't been engaging or has not managed to capture the very children who need it. The children have been offered many other opportunities through the city-wide strategy but, for whatever reason, it has not appealed to them, but **Move For Fun has been quite unique, because it has reached and engaged them.**"*

School teacher

Evaluation and analysis

Developed by DGI, the GO! concept is a method of evaluating motivation

The GO! concept is split into four simple categories:

Go Fit – The motivation comes from obtaining a health, aesthetic or well-being benefit from participating.

Go Fun – The motivation comes from the fact that the activity is full of pleasure and joy.

Go Pro – The motivation comes from wanting to improve purposefully, achieve results and perform.

Go Together – The motivation comes from being with others. The feeling of belonging is a central driving force.

The GO! concept was used to capture what the participating children like best about the programme. Simple, emoji-based prompt cards were used to get feedback from the children. Initially, the children expressed a strong interest in the **Go Fun** aspect of the programme; however, as the weeks progressed, they identified additional benefits, such as improved fitness (**Go Fit**) and the opportunity to foster new friendships (**Go Together**). This has proven especially beneficial for children facing interpersonal challenges within their peer groups.



Challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic created challenges for the programme

COVID-19 pandemic-related school closures and the return-to-school period presented several challenges, including a shortage of teachers, low motivation among educators to add new elements to schedules, and a high turnover rate among city education staff, including school coordinators.

In the Leicester community, the roll-out to more schools was initially delayed, due to staff changes and schools having more pressing priorities due to the pandemic.

Adaptation

The initial execution of the plan was impacted by the closure of schools and the subsequent challenges in gaining the support and enthusiasm of teachers dealing with the resulting disruptions. As a consequence, fewer children were able to benefit from the programme within the originally envisioned timeframe. Therefore, a phased approach was adopted.

Ensuring that all parties were kept informed and updated made it feasible to implement the programme gradually, over an extended period. In addition, more schools have expressed their willingness to participate and, by remaining adaptable and strategic in its approach, Move For Fun has extended the planned duration of its offering.

Key learning

Having a strategic approach to determining the type of offering to introduce in each school and avoiding repetition was crucial. Moreover, giving the children significant input in deciding which sports and activities to incorporate fostered a strong enthusiasm for participation.



Highlight

"Unforeseen benefits have been that the Move For Fun clubs have been helping children post-COVID pandemic, by providing a safe place for them to play and also promoting socialisation again. Many young children had been badly affected by the disruption to their education and having to stay at home with very limited contact with people other than family members."

Helen Vost, YST-I

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About the partners



DGI

DGI is the biggest “sport for all” association in Denmark, focusing exclusively on strengthening and promoting physical activity and sport participation for all citizens through local clubs and communities. DGI collaborates with a wide range of partners to promote health and social well-being. The organisation has 6,600 member associations with 1.7 million volunteers. More than 30,000 volunteers, coaches and leaders attend courses at DGI every year.

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International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA)

International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA) is a global umbrella association with an active community of 3,669 MOVE Agents and a democratic backbone of 81 member organisations, all of which are national and local promoters of sport, play and physical activity. We develop and deploy concepts to empower organisations worldwide to get citizens from all walks of life more physically active.

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Novo Nordisk

Novo Nordisk is a leading global healthcare company, founded in 1923 and headquartered in Denmark. Our purpose is to drive change to defeat serious chronic diseases, built upon our heritage in diabetes. We do so by pioneering scientific breakthroughs, expanding access to our medicines, and working to prevent and ultimately cure disease. Novo Nordisk employs about 59,000 people in 80 countries and markets its products in around 170 countries.

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This playbook and the corresponding case studies have been developed by Cities for Better Health .

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Cities for Better Health

Cities for Better Health is a global network focused on driving systematic change by working through local partnerships. The programme aims to put health high on city government agendas by working across departments to integrate health into all policies and co-creating initiatives that demonstrate what can be achieved.

Cities for Better Health works alongside cities, researchers and community partners to advance opportunities for healthier eating and active living in underserved communities, especially for children.

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