

SPORT & YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT

YEAR 2 EVALUATION

Aim

Centre for Mental Health is working with Active Essex Foundation as the external evaluation partner for the 3-year Sport and Youth Mental Health Project across Greater Essex. The aim of the project is to create a proactive mental health support offer across Greater Essex for children and young people (CYP) between 5-18 years of age, using sport and physical activity as a tool to improve their mental wellbeing and resilience.

The report provides an evaluation of the impact at the 2-year stage of the project, in relation to 3 key areas:

- Children and young people being supported
- Capacity building of the Locally Trusted Organisations (LTOs) delivering the programmes across the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector
- Integration with wider system partners.

YOUTH VOICE

“Before this programme, I didn't really leave my room much. Now I actually look forward to (club/sessions) because I know I'll see everyone here. It's the only place where I don't feel judged for being anxious.”

YOUNG PERSON

“I'm not really a sports person, but (club/sessions) has made me feel relaxed, and that has given me room in my brain for exercise.”

YOUNG PERSON

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

1,197 children and young people were supported in Year 2, with **465** included in the evaluation.

195 females **261** males **9** transgender, non-binary, prefer not to say

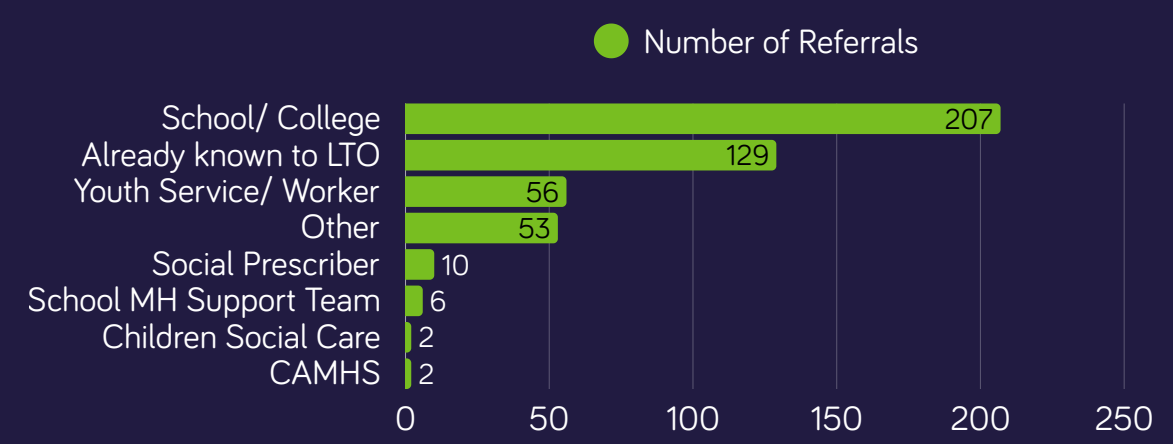
25% were from ethnically diverse backgrounds

14% had a diagnosed mental health condition

51% were recorded as having SEND

59% living in areas of highest deprivation (IMD Decile 1-5)

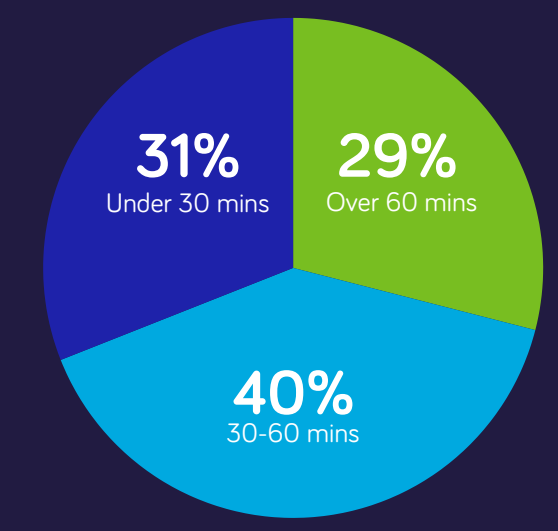
REFERRAL SOURCE DATA



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVELS

64% of CYP reported an increase in daily physical activity levels since coming to the club/session

**21 of the 25 who reported no change in physical activity levels were already completing over 30 mins per day*

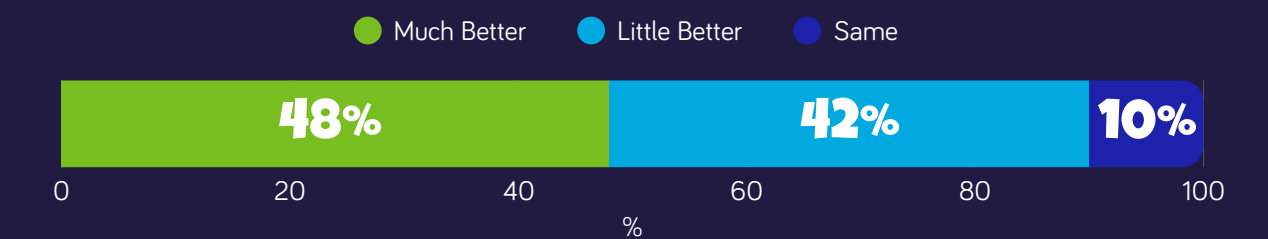


CYP levels of daily physical activity at the end of the programme.

**There were no baseline levels to quantify increase*

LINKS BETWEEN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

90% of CYP reported that taking part in physical activity at the club/session improved how they were feeling.



The majority of CYP who reported improvements in how they were feeling due to physical activity, also responded positively to specific questions related to increased social interaction, confidence, and resilience.



Click the icon to watch a short video to hear from young people and parents, highlighting the positive impact these programmes are having.



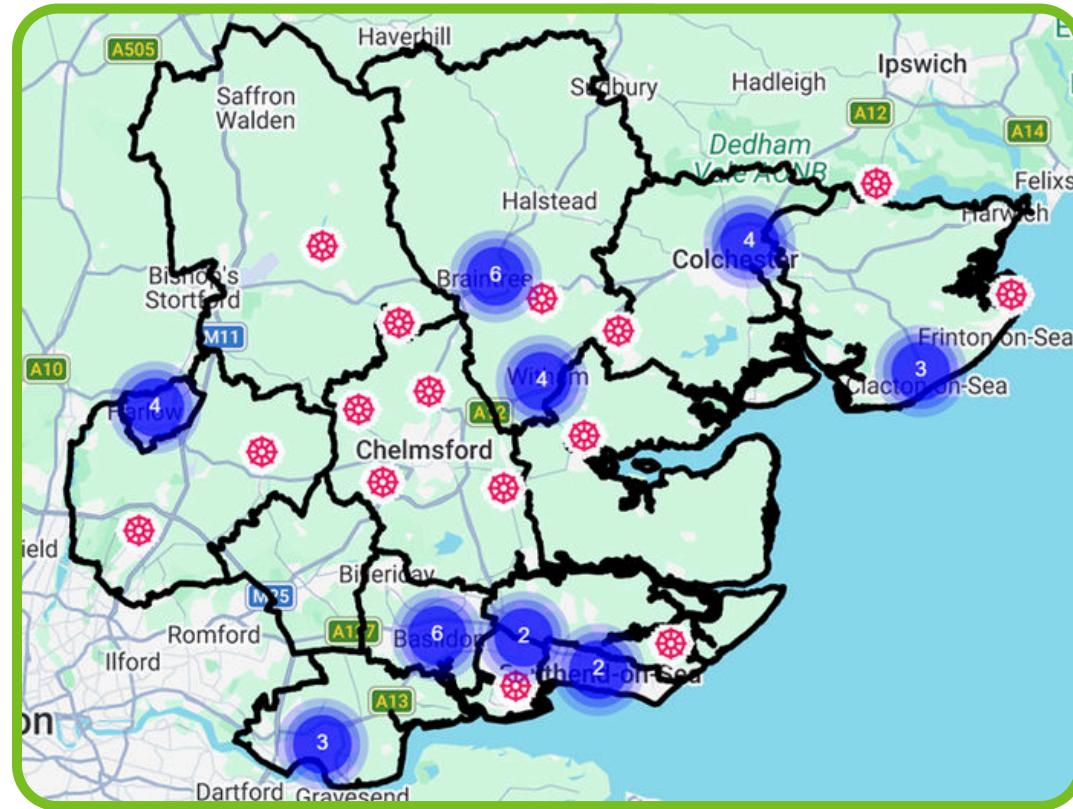
LOCALLY TRUSTED ORGANISATIONS

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LTO's across Greater Essex delivered programmes in their communities

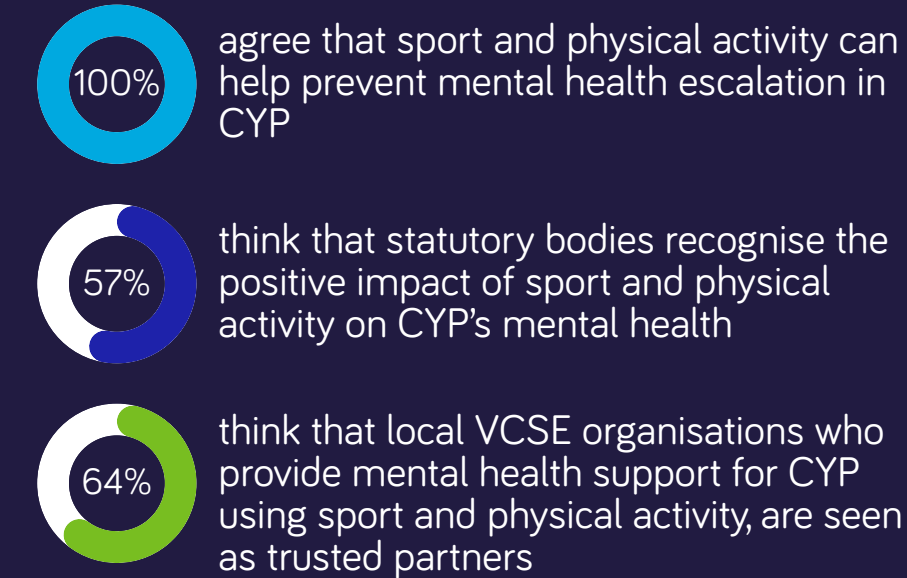
Map of provision over Year 1 and 2

*Blue circles represent more than one provision, with the number showing how many provisions in total.



SYSTEM PARTNERS

7 participated in semi-structured interviews and 14 completed a survey, including NHS and Local Authority partners



Challenges/ Opportunities

- Systems continue to operate in silos and fragmentation, with rigid governance and limited communication and collaboration
- Need to build evidence to support physical interventions for CYP's mental health using a shared outcomes framework

Wide variety of physical activities were delivered across the following categories:

- Outdoor, nature-based, gardening
- Yoga for wellbeing and emotional literacy
- Arts-based activities, such as theatre, dance and crafts
- Sports-led, such as boxing, football, dodgeball, foosball, climbing and bouldering



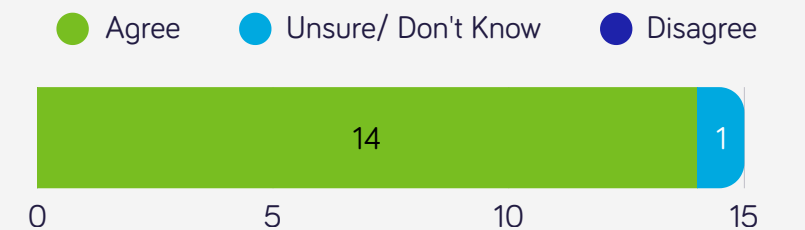
Significant increases in LTOs' self-reported knowledge, skills and confidence supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing in their settings.

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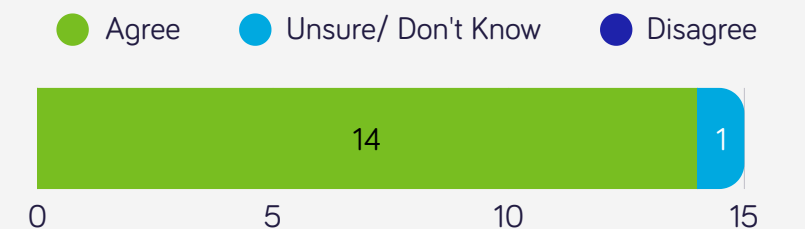
LTO staff and wider workforce from across 40 VCSE organisations received training to build capacity and capability around delivery, including youth mental health and wellbeing support, inclusivity, and embedding physical activity.

LTO SURVEY RESULTS, CENTRE FOR MENTAL HEALTH SURVEY *based on 15 responses

Compared to last year, do you think you/ your staff have increased confidence to deliver sport and physical activity for mental health?



Compared to last year, do you think you/ your staff have increased knowledge and skills to use sport and physical activity to improve CYP's mental wellbeing?



CONCLUSIONS



Analysis of the impact of the 3 year Sport and Youth Mental Health Project, at Year 2 stage clearly shows the following:

- Children and young people being supported are experiencing improvements in confidence, emotional regulation, social connection, family relationships, school engagement and overall wellbeing
- LTOs have strengthened their skills, confidence and organisational capacity in supporting children and young people's mental health using sport and physical activity
- System partners recognise the role this project plays to bring stakeholders together whilst helping to tackle some of the fragmentation across the mental health system for children and young people
- Highlights the need for long term financial sustainability and stronger collaboration and integration across sectors to ensure the lasting beneficial impact on children and young people's mental health and wellbeing in Essex

RECOMMENDATIONS



Analysis of the findings from year two has built on the 5 recommendations from the year 1 evaluation:

1 Strengthen inter-sector collaboration through enhanced networking opportunities.

Active Essex Foundation is recognised as a local leader in children and young people's physical activity and mental health, but that a fragmented system means future funding should better incentivise cross-sector collaboration and integrated delivery models.

2 Continue to strengthen collaboration between LTOs through joint funding, bid collaborations and resource sharing.

Active Essex Foundation strengthened collaboration between LTOs, while findings highlighted concerns about the sustainability of funded sessions and the value of flexible funding, leading to a recommendation for multi-year, flexible investment to support stability, local responsiveness and continued collaboration, particularly for small VCSE organisations.

3 Prioritise tailored, inclusive provision for SEND, vulnerable, & underrepresented children & young people groups.

We found that LTOs provide tailored support for children and young people with SEND and engage vulnerable groups, but limited outcome data restricts understanding of their impact, highlighting the need for Active Essex Foundation to further support LTOs with data collection and evaluation.

4 Further embed physical activity and movement into mental health pathways.

System partners and LTOs reported challenges evidencing preventative outcomes due to siloed data, lack of shared metrics, and funder focus on short-term outputs, with Active Essex Foundation well placed to lead the development of shared, long-term outcomes frameworks given its recognised role in linking physical activity and youth mental health in Essex.

5 Explore opportunities for coproduction with children and young people and system partners in the design and evaluation of physical activity and wellbeing services.

Active Essex Foundation has taken a more proactive approach to coproducing the design and evaluation of physical activity programmes for mental health by involving children and young people, LTOs and community representatives, while recognising further scope to strengthen coproduction in evaluation.



Click the icon to read the full Sport & Youth Mental Health Project Year 2 evaluation report.