

Active Colleges Briefing Paper



Focus on students with additional needs

This short paper outlines the impact that the Active Colleges programme is having on students with additional needs. The paper brings together broad data from the evaluation of the Active Colleges programme in general, as well as some key examples from specific College Sport Makers. This paper draws on the experiences of two College Sport Makers:

- **CJ Stephens at Franklin College** – a sixth form college for 16-18 year olds located in Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire. The college primarily serves students who want to study for ‘A’ levels and has recently seen an increase in student numbers from 1500 to 1800.
- **Gaz Lee at Bishop Burton College** – a college historically associated with land-based courses, but which is now a specialist college for sport. The college’s Beverley campus has 1400 students and capacity for more than 350 to live onsite.

Background

Analysis of the most recent Student Leisure Survey shows an increase in participation from **77.5%** of students in the baseline survey¹ to **80.2%** in the latest survey². This represents a statistically significant increase in participation. An increase of **2.7 percentage points** or a total percentage increase of **+3.5%**.

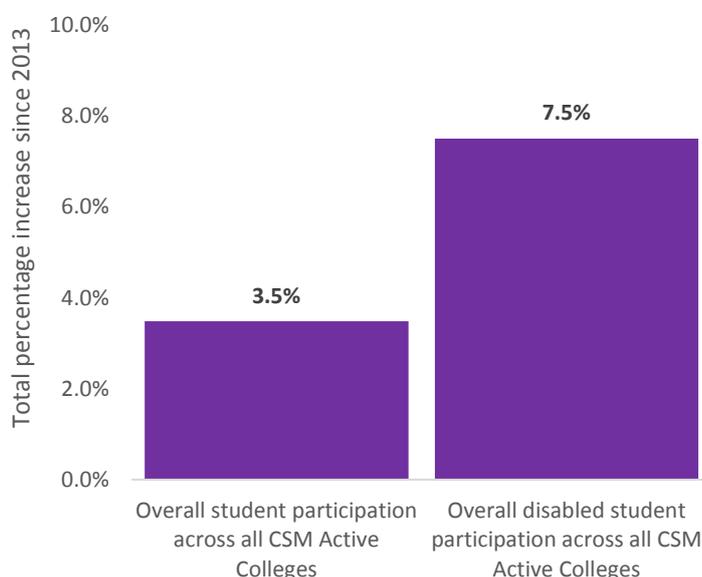


Figure 1: Change in participation in sport or physical activity for students with additional needs [Bases = [xxx]].

Since investment by Sport England in the Active Colleges programme, participation in sport and physical activity has also increased significantly for many students who have traditionally had lower participation rates. Since 2013 there has been a variable increase in participation rates across these demographic groups (for example Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups, females, and part-time students). In particular, students with additional needs have seen participation in sport or physical activity for 1x30 minutes per week increase from **70.6%** in the baseline survey to **75.9%** in the latest survey. An increase of **5.3 percentage points** or a total percentage increase of **7.5%** (Figure 1).

Across the Active Colleges programme, College Sport Makers have been focussed on delivering **sustainable participation** in sport for students with additional needs.

¹ The baseline survey (the Student Leisure Survey, Wave 1) was conducted in April 2013 and created a measurement of participation and impact from which the data from subsequent surveys can be compared.

² Student Leisure Survey, Wave 7, Year 3 College Sport Maker Survey (CSM Yr3) March 2016.



Encouraging students with additional needs to participate in sport and physical activity

Student participation in 1x30 minutes of sport or physical activity per week at Franklin College and Bishop Burton College is 80% and 75% respectively. While these figures are similar to the national average across all Active Colleges, prior to the programme there was a limited and narrow existing sports provision at both colleges. At Franklin College for example, there was a lack of provision and strategic vision for students with additional needs, while at Bishop Burton the sports focus was primarily around *elite sports participation* rather than providing sporting opportunity for all.

Since CJ has been in post at Franklin College the breadth and choice of sporting opportunities now available has significantly grown and includes a 19 team football league, with different activities on offer in the afternoon and after school. Student feedback demonstrates this cultural shift towards sports activity at the college with the perception now being that the sports offer is wider than in previous years (Figure 2).

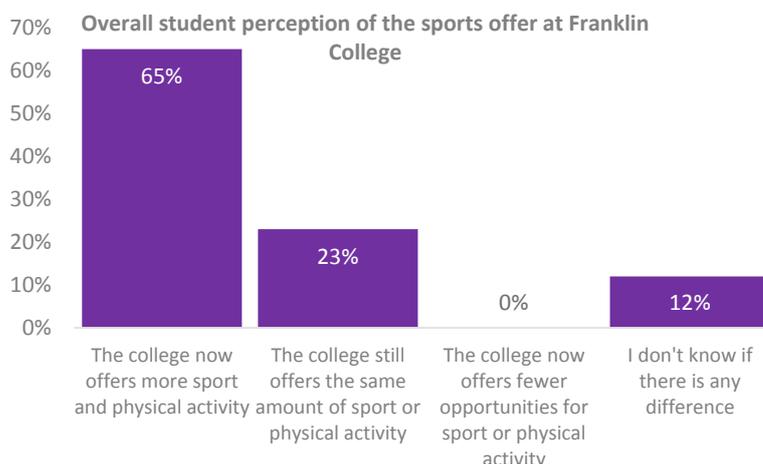


Figure 2: Overall student perception of the sports offer at Franklin College (base = [xxx]).

Participating in sport is not just about being the next best athlete, it can be used to help people be the best person they can be. Gaz

For Gaz, the Active Colleges programme is important in enabling students from all backgrounds to engage and participate in sport in a fun and informal way – and using it to help students who may not have had the opportunity to participate before get the chance.

All students across the Active Colleges state that, encouraging and sustaining sport and physical activity at college requires a sports offer which:

- Fits around specific timetable requirements; and
- Provides strong and positive communication of the types and availability of sport at the college.

In addition, students with additional needs state that they want to **participate in sport with other students of a similar standard and ability**, at least in the first instance. As such, both CJ and Gaz have developed approaches and sporting opportunities which help achieve this.

At Franklin College

Critical to CJ's role as College Sport Maker, she encouraged disabled students to participate in sport and physical activity by: **Getting to know** students on a one-to-one basis; Offering **pastoral support** as well as sporting advice, and; Ensuring that she was **available for students** to come and see her at any time.

This highly personal approach removed any potential barriers for students and had a snowball effect, encouraging sport participation amongst disabled students. Students began to associate sport as a **fun and sociable event**, while CJ was instrumental in ensuring that sport was high on the college agenda, increasing visibility, and providing a direct point of contact for students.

Impact on students and college

Getting young people who are less likely to be active to participate is critical to the success of College Sport Makers, but is also beneficial to the student and the college. Students who participate in sport or physical activity state that they experience both physical and mental health benefits as a result. Figure 3 shows the range and frequency of these benefits as reported by students with additional needs across all Active Colleges. The main physical benefit focuses on increased fitness levels, as might be expected. The broad range of mental health benefits, however, can have an impact not only on the students themselves, but also wider college strategic goals and even contribute to local and community benefits.

For example, general mental health improvements (reducing stress), engaging in a fun and enjoyable activity, increased confidence and making new friends can help engender positive attitudes and increase happiness. Further to this, respondents state that participation has improved their academic performance, development employability skills and in some instances even kept them out of trouble/crime.

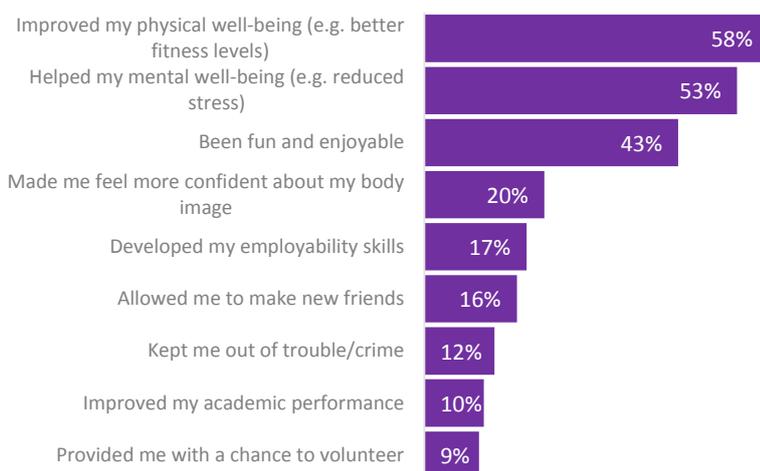


Figure 3: Main benefits reported by students with additional needs as a result of participation in sport or physical activity (base = [xxx]).

Part of this increase in participation across under-represented groups is the innovative and collaborative way in which Active Colleges are working to encourage long-term engagement across different colleges and college sites. An example of this activity, focusing on disability, is highlighted in Figure 4.

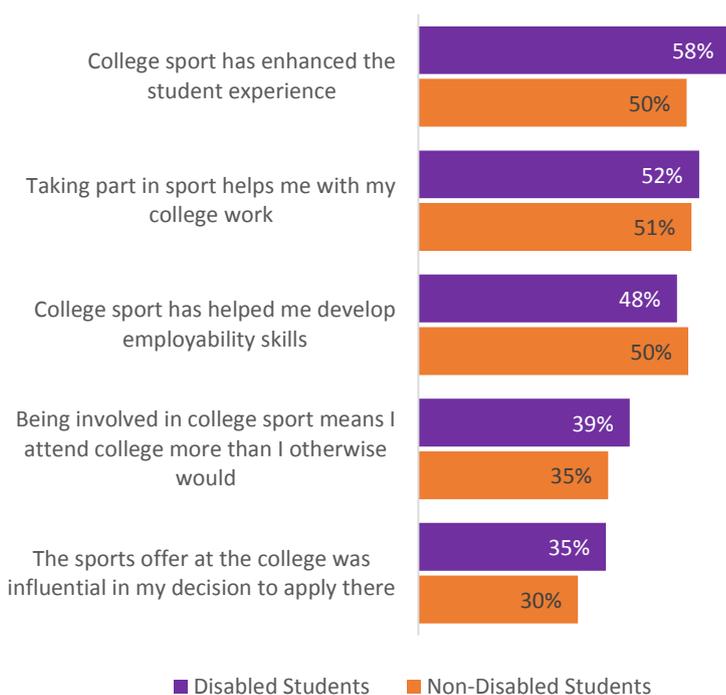


Figure 4: Outcomes of sport or physical activity for students (base = [xxx]).

This figure presents student perceptions of the impact that sports participation, or the sports offer at the college has on them. The data presented here helps to understand the relationship between participating in sport and the impact this has on colleges as a result.

For many Active Colleges, building activities which are attractive to students traditionally less likely to participate will often involve working with wider local college networks. At Bishop Burton College, for example, Gaz has been working with 5 other College Sport Makers in the Humber Region to establish the *five-for-all* football tournament.

This tournament gives students with learning difficulties, severe behavioural issues, social interaction needs (such as a lack of confidence), or mild medical conditions (for example, a heart condition) the chance to participate in competitive sport, make new friends and (of critical importance) the experience of representing their colleges in a formal, engaged and public environment. Gaz believes that, because of events such as five-for-all, which gives students a place to focus, release energy and widen their social interaction, they are now more disciplined, better behaved and gain a better college experience as a result.

*The fact that the students are now more able to create a rapport with people they don't know well is testament to the impact of participating in sport - this wouldn't have happened before the five-for-all sessions were started. **Gaz***

Andy is an 18 year old former student and provides a striking example of the impact of sport at Franklin College for students with additional needs. Prior to CJ joining, Andy felt the college did not provide attractive and appropriate sporting opportunities for disabled students. Through CJ's passion for making sport inclusive for everyone, and by widening the sporting offer at the college (by offering Boccia and Poly-bat classes for example) Andy, and other disabled students began to participate regularly. Importantly for Andy, CJ sought the input of students, which fed into subsequent sports activities. CJ also took part in the activities too. Andy felt that there was a genuine sense of inclusion that everybody was valued and could participate in sport.

*“By the time I got to play Boccia I was ready for it – I was tired, stressed and really welcomed the opportunity it offered to talk to people. The mental support that sport offered was great”. **Andy***

Over time, this approach led to both disabled and non-disabled students participating together, something that Andy greatly appreciated. Andy now coaches sports for students with additional needs and advocates the benefits of people participating in a team sport. He has also signed up for a Sports Leadership Programme. Through his involvement in sport, Andy has developed transferrable skills that he has used to set up his new website development business.

The community perspective

Equally important has been the links created between Active Colleges and local community organisations, County Sports Partnerships and other regional stakeholders. This is, in part, critical for College Sports Makers as they look to meet specific targets based on their role and activity. Across the Active Colleges network, for example, links to local and community programmes and groups has increased significantly since the start of the programme.

College Sport Maker Activity	Increase since the start of Active Colleges	Percentage increase
Community Links	641	393%
Regular Participation Activities off College Site	371	742%

Total activity numbers across 156 colleges with complete data on the CSM Delivery Plan Target Tracker

At Bishop Burton, for example, Gaz has developed a relationship with Active Humber, who meet three times a year to discuss new projects, network ideas and brainstorm sports priorities and access for all types of students. This is what Gaz describes as a *healthy, two way relationship*, which benefits from constant communication across other CSMs in the region. Through this connection,

Gaz has developed links with School Sports Partnerships to identify new events and to help facilitate work.

For CJ at Franklin College, working with local sports organisers such as Colin Woodford has had a real impact on the range of activities available for students with additional needs. Colin runs local disability sports activities for young people in the North Lincolnshire area, and is chairman of the North Lincolnshire Disability Sports Forum. The Sports Disability Forum hosts a diverse itinerary of sporting and social events including tenpin bowling, trips to Grimsby Town Football Club, water-skiing with the British Disabled Water-ski Association, and knockout competitions (such as Boccia).

CJ believes that these opportunities have been instrumental in helping her to engage with disabled people and sports groups in the local community. Using Colin's experience, CJ build a partnership where community focussed disabled sports sessions are hosted at the college one afternoon a week. Equally, fostering links with CJ has enabled Colin to promote sport and physical activity at charity events organised by the college, annual open days and local community sporting events for disabled students – this shows significant potential transferrable impact.

Focus on challenges

CJ and Gaz have both experienced challenges in their role in helping students with additional needs to participate in sport and physical activity. These main challenges are described as follows:

- Establishing links with staff to help promote and encourage sports activity across the college. Many staff perceived that additional sports activity (outside of the College's formal offer) would involve additional work in an already busy schedule.
- Staff, also, do not always appreciate or see the value in sports participation across the student cohort.
- Sometimes working with students with additional needs brings challenges in facilitating group activity on the one hand while also being mindful of each student's individual needs.
- In order to overcome this, both CJ and Gaz focussed their own activity on recruiting students personally
- They worked to enhance the image of sport (particularly for disabled students) by engaging with students, talking to them and encouraging them on a one-to-one basis.
- This approach is time intensive, and may not be appropriate across the whole Active Colleges network – however, by engaging with students, and listening to their needs disabled students in particular are now more willing to participate and more likely to experience positive outcomes.

If you would like further information about the work that Colleges are doing in helping students to participate in sport or physical activity please contact:

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