

Street Dance Initiative: North West Leicestershire District Council

The problem of teenage drop out in sport is a difficult one to tackle, but *Street Dance* has risen to the challenge. This project's key to success has been to make physical activity fun and more appealing to young girls and boys, by building on the positive aspects of 'youth culture'. The project was inspired by an enthusiastic young dance instructor who knows how to tap into young people's enthusiasm for music and fashion, and can use this to get young people moving.

School taster sessions were developed which link to weekly dance sessions at the local leisure centre. Teenagers are taught the dance steps to their favourite chart hits, and are given the opportunity to show off their latest moves at demonstration events held at fetes and fun days.

Demand has made the project self-sustaining, and has led to a second class being established for girls as well as a break dance class for teenage boys. Inspired by this success, a one day event - 'What Women Want' - was held which offered the chance for women and girls to try a range of activities and promote opportunities for long term participation.

Group members are given a free family swim voucher for completing a feedback form which monitors their thoughts and feelings towards the project.



Ruth Mann, the project co-ordinator says that measuring girl's attitudes towards activity is very important: 'Girls are more likely not to do sport due to feeling embarrassed, thinking that they aren't good enough and thinking that girls aren't welcome at sports clubs'. Ruth thinks that building on 'youth culture' is one of the most important key elements behind the project's success and attributes it to the instructor's personality and ability to interact with the girls: 'Street Dance bridges the gap between perceived 'childish' school sport and adult physical activity patterns'.

The project was formally evaluated after a long pilot period using a questionnaire which assessed the attitudes of girls who took part, and the link with attendance figures at leisure centres and other venues. It was felt that the true impact of the project may not have been fully captured as the evaluation was conducted at a late stage in the project. 'Evaluation is seen as something which can easily slip unless it is made a priority' says Ruth. Evaluation now focuses on outcome measures of potential participants who are given a leisure centre membership card at the taster sessions and dance events, so that participation and usage can be tracked.