

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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"As a mother, yoga teacher and a leader whose mission is to promote successful home school relationships, I wholeheartedly support ukactive's Blueprint for an Active Britain. At PTA UK, through encouraging positive home school relationships we are doing our bit: through supporting programmes such as Living Streets and Change4Life we encourage PTAs to work closely with their school to develop walking schemes and fun activities; our members raise more than £120m a year to provide playgrounds, PE equipment and even swimming pools in schools and our parent volunteers are the ones that often make possible the extracurricular activities that improve the quality of school life."



FITNESS IS CHILD'S PLAY

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Fig 9.

THE PRIMARY
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INTRODUCTION

Today's children are the least active generation in history: only half of all children in the UK achieve the sixty minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity recommended by the Chief Medical Officer. Earlier this year, ukactive released a policy report that warned of creating 'Generation Inactive.' An entirely preventable lack of activity means Generation Inactive are at a higher risk of experiencing physical, mental and social health issues throughout their lives.

Until now, the debate on childhood inactivity has focused on tackling obesity through the promotion of childhood sport and PE – an approach dangerously narrow in scope and doomed to failure. We have been trying to solve the wrong problem with the wrong solution. A double negative that does not balance out and it simply leaves us no closer to getting young people moving.

Regular activity offers health benefits far beyond weight management, including improved physical and mental health and higher academic attainment.

A more radical and comprehensive approach is now needed: both to understand the extent of childhood inactivity and build basic activity back into children's lives. Movement and play should be an integral part of every child's life; from their first months children and parents must be supported by the health, education and physical activity sectors to instil this vital habit at the earliest stage. Work needs to be done to create a greater understanding between teachers, parents, the health sector, children's activity and sport providers and children themselves, as to what works in getting children moving again.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1 There is currently no standardised, comprehensive measurement of children's fitness. Government and the academic community must understand the extent of the inactivity crisis in children and young people today if we are to turn the tide effectively on Generation Inactive.

>> Government should commission further evidence into a standardised baseline measure for children's fitness and their achievement of the CMO's guidelines for physical activity, as is currently being investigated in several Local Authority areas, with the view to eventually extend the National Child Measurement Programme to measure fitness.

>> A full-scale review should be commissioned to investigate levels of inactivity during childhood and provide a detailed programme of reform to ingrain activity back into children's daily lives, with particular focus on tackling inactivity. The review to include consultation with parents, teachers and children's activity providers.

2 Activity and movement should once again become the norm for children and young people at school and beyond.

>> The primary 'PE & Sport Premium' should be rebranded as the primary 'Physical Activity and PE Premium' to address the core issue of inactivity and the notion that there are plenty of fun and efficient ways that children can be active throughout the day.

>> Head teachers should be supported to understand how the school can create environments conducive to activity throughout the school, adopting a whole school, whole-day approach to physical activity and ensuring appropriate support is given to children who require it the most.

>> Parents and schools should collaborate to ensure walking to school becomes the norm for the majority of children, exploring the possibility and implementation of car-free zones and walking buses.

>> Local authorities should work with high schools and academies, initially in pilot areas, to provide a long-term motivational behavioural change intervention scheme in partnership with activity providers, to engage the most inactive children and signpost to activity opportunities tailored to individual needs.

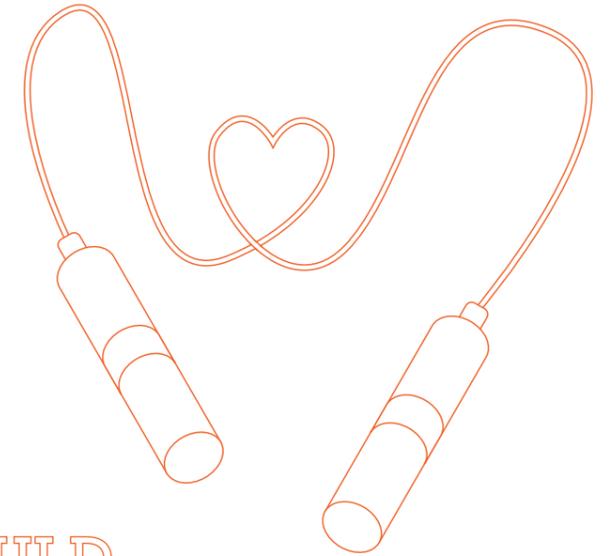
>> Schools should be encouraged to engage the support of high quality external providers to help raise the capabilities of teachers, provide additional capacity or deliver a broader range of activity services for young people.

>> Parents should be supported to make sure that children have plenty of active choices during weekend and holiday periods, with the provision of children's activities and opportunities to play included within Personalised Activity Plans promoted within the wider 'Workout from Work' policy.



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3 Parents and families should be supported to develop active lifestyles, to ensure children develop the lifelong habit of regular physical activity from the earliest age.

- >> New parents should be supported with usable guidance during pregnancy and post-natal care regarding the importance of an active start to life in the early years. This should include signposting to accessible physical activity opportunities in the local area. Parents should have access to on-going support and guidance throughout the first five years of parenthood.
- >> The forthcoming Childcare Bill, guaranteeing 30 hours of free childcare a week for children aged 3-4, should include a statutory requirement for a dedicated allocation of time for play and physical activity, with effective models of delivery of Motivational Interviewing already underway with the National Childbirth Trust scaled up.

4 There is a perception, rightly so in some cases, that technology has contributed to the increasingly sedentary lifestyles of children. However as recent developments in active software and hardware have shown, rapidly emerging technology can also present a huge opportunity for, rather than just a barrier to, activity.

- >> To fully grasp the potential of new and emerging technology to inspire and support children to get active, the technology sector should be encouraged to develop inspiring, innovative and evidence-based platforms and applications targeted at children, and build upon high-potential models. The sector should also spread the message to parents that new technology can embed active habits as much as it can increase sedentary time. Parents should be encouraged to limit their children's screen time to 120 minutes for children under five and 60 minutes for children under five.