The School Games Ambassador Group: Celebrating Birmingham 2022 and Diversity in West Yorkshire

Overview:
Emma Binnersley from Yorkshire Sport Foundation worked with 5 SGOs in West Yorkshire School Games to establish a countywide School Games Ambassador Group, made possible by Birmingham 2022 legacy funding.

From its inception the Ambassador Group aimed to embody what the School Games' latest outcomes represent such as increased diversity and engagement with those most in need.

Using Birmingham 2022 as inspiration they nominated a diverse group of less sporty Year 9 students to help design a Commonwealth Games Celebration of Sport Festival, re-engaging Year 7 children in the most deprived areas of the county.

SG Ambassador Group

Objectives

- Gather youth insight into how the West Yorkshire School Games presence can engage a diverse young people audience
- To co-develop an event aimed at children and young people (CYP) who need it the most
- To develop the ambassadors themselves in the skill areas of confidence, creativity and teamwork

Who was the target audience and how were they engaged?

The Celebration of Sport Festival aimed to re-engage Year 7 children in most need of sport-related activities after multiple lockdowns. The audience included children from poorer backgrounds, diverse ethnic backgrounds, SEND children, and girls. The Ambassadors the SGOs recruited were less sporty Year 9 student, tasked with researching the activities that should be at the Festival. The Ambassadors talked to children from the target group in their schools and brought their findings to an Ambassador Conference. Here they worked with the SGOs and other adults to develop activities for the Festival that would have the most appeal to the targeted groups of CYP.

Why was the activity unique?

By purposefully involving less sporty Year 9 students as Ambassadors West Yorkshire School Games actively listened to the youth voice and put CYP at the heart of the Festival, rather than prescribing activities that may not engage them. The programme also involved recruiting a number of partners to help deliver the event. This collaborative approach meant that the positive impact was maximised further, particularly when it came apparent to Emma and the SGOs that the partners they worked with had a shared goal to tackle inequalities when it comes to physical activity opportunities.

What was the impact felt in schools and by CYP?

The Ambassadors made a valuable contribution at the Conference, which in turn improved their presentation, confidence and leadership skills. Teachers spoke of the Ambassadors' maturity on the day and the importance they put on providing activities to help people like themselves. The creativity the Ambassadors demonstrated during the day was extremely positive and led to a number of activities being selected to be part of the event in the summer - something that the Ambassadors felt extremely proud of.

Why is this an example of School Games best practice?

The School Games Ambassador Group realises School Games' vision of engaging inactive CYP. The Ambassador Conference brought together CYP, SGOs and the schools, working towards the shared goal of re-engaging CYP in sport and physical activity post-COVID. The Year 9 Ambassadors had their voice heard when shaping activities less sporty students would enjoy and benefit from. The resulting Summer Festival is a great example of co-creation between CYP, School Games and schools and will kick start the ongoing re-engagement of Year 7 pupils and others in improving their fitness and mental health.

It was really fun creating our own ideas and we felt listened to.
- CYP

I love helping out and leading events.
- CYP

I like the idea that they take ideas from us as students because otherwise it would just be the adults deciding activities.
- CYP

For more information please contact the entrant on Emma.Binnersley@yorkshiresport.org