SCHOOL GAMES IMPACT AWARDS

The Neon Run: A new co-designed festival of fun for Devon

Overview:
Rebecca Skinner, Programme Manager at Active Devon, worked closely with SGOs and children and young people (CYP) across Devon to create a new event for local non-sporty girls.

The Neon Run - a non-competitive celebration focused on fun and social interaction - brought over a hundred girls together through positive experience of physical activity. The project offered a new outlook on running, one that could last a lifetime.

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The Neon Run

Objectives

- Support the least active girls in the county to build confidence trying new sports and physical activities
- To provide a positive experience that would stay with the CYP, leaving them with a feeling that physical activity and movement can be fun and for them

Who was the target audience and how were they engaged?

Through regular collaboration with the Devon School Games Network, CYP and school consultations, and digesting Active Lives Survey data, Rebecca and her team identified a need to engage with less active young girls. To do so, the team launched a Couch to 2k or 5k initiative helping build confidence in running among the target CYP.

Those who took part were then considered for the Neon Run. However the team gave clear instructions to schools about who the event was being run for. This meant being explicit with schools who the event was not for, such as girls who attended every after-school club or were able to easily run 5k.

Why was the activity unique?

The Neon Run's festival feel - enhanced by UV paint, photo booths and music - makes it stand out. By creating a joyful, fun atmosphere the team were able to remove confidence barriers for the girls and get them engaged in running. It is clear that positive experiences was the organisers' driving force.

The addition of Birmingham 2022 sport taster sessions set out across the route also offered additional fun experiences for the girls to try. This also exposed the girls to new sports and possibly even ignited a new passion for them.

What was the impact felt in schools and by CYP?

By focusing on celebration, not competition, the organisers ensured that the girls were able to enjoy the run at their own pace. School staff believe this will inspire their pupils to continue running in the future.

Not only were the girls able to feel the positive benefits of physical activity, but also get a chance to increase their social skills in a friendly environment thanks to the county-wide activity. The event's overwhelming positive response both at and after is testament to that.

I feel so glad I have done it and it was so fun!
- CYP

Today was the best school day of my life
- CYP

An amazing positive experience, memories of which will hopefully inspire participation in a lifetime of running events!
- School Staff

Why is this an example of School Games best practice?

Through the SGO network, the team could co-develop the event with young girls to ensure that it would meet the needs of their target audience.

They believe the insight and creativity the girls brought is the main reason for the event's success. The team have expressed they will now be putting a much bigger emphasis on youth co-design.

Also, the close collaboration between the Active Partnership and local SGOs was key to CYP engagement and the positive impact the Neon Run achieved.

For more information please contact the entrant on rebecca.skinner@activedevon.org