



## Creating high quality competition environments for all and sustaining participation beyond the school gates

Nicola Biggs, Simon Mitchell and Michala Swales

### WHICH AREA OF THE SGO TASK LIST DOES THIS IMPACT?

- 1 Increasing engagement in School Games
- 2 Developing competitive opportunities
- 3 Increasing and sustaining participation
- 4 Workforce – Broadening the range of participation opportunities

### ABOUT NICOLA, SIMON & MICHALA

Nottinghamshire SGOs Nicola Biggs, Simon Mitchell and Michala Swales work collaboratively on this project. All three SGOs work three days per week covering the SGO role, but have additional days funded by primary schools to cover their additional offer. Each SGO covers between 50-58 schools in the count of Nottinghamshire. Deprivation levels are varied across all three SGO areas.

Nicola Biggs, Mansfield SGO  
[biggsn@themanager.notts.sch.uk](mailto:biggsn@themanager.notts.sch.uk)

Simon Mitchell, Newark and Sherwood SGO  
[mitchells@josephwhitaker.org](mailto:mitchells@josephwhitaker.org)

Michala Swales, Bassetlaw SGO  
[mswales@refordp16.org](mailto:mswales@refordp16.org)



### WHY

- The SGOs wanted an inspiring and stimulating environment for their Change4Life festival.
- The Forestry Commission appointed an Active Forest Coordinator and wanted to work in partnership with the SGOs to encourage more young people to utilise their natural environment to be active.



### ACTION

- The SGOs hosted their first Change4Life Summer Fest at Sherwood Pines. The Forestry Commission staff supported the activities. The venue and support was all for free!
- Schools were invited to target the children that didn't usually take part in sports competitions and/or those children in their Change4Life clubs.
- The activities were planned to suit the children's motivations, competence and confidence levels. Activities included dance/zumba, orienteering, multi-skills, shelter building, fitness challenge and archery.
- The schools and the SGOs agreed that the inspirational and stimulating environment was great for the children. The alternative activities that were on offer were engaging, non-competitive and the fun delivery style suited the targeted children.

- Following the Summer Fest, the SGOs and the Active Forest Coordinator met to discuss how they could work together in the future.
- Further events were delivered either as stand-alone events or as part of bigger festivals, which included a Go Run for Fun event, Race for Life, cross country, orienteering, bushcraft, mountain biking and fruit tasting, offering a wide variety of competitions and festivals aimed at different children.
- The SGOs aimed to get as many children to the forest to experience their local natural environment and experience activities on offer to encourage the children to be more physically active.



## IMPACT

- Thousands of children across the three SGO areas accessing alternative activities in an inspiring environment.
- Children comment at events that they have never been to the forest before. The events showcase what is available.
- Schools have started to take their children for their own events (school trips etc).
- Schools have informed the SGOs that their children are going home and asking parents to take them back to the forest to take part in other activities on offer.
- The alternative activities highlight to both schools and the children that physical activity is not just about sport.



## NEXT

- The SGOs want to keep increasing the activities on offer, ensuring that there is a wide variety that suits all children.
- The SGOs have made a video to promote their events and the activities on offer. This is a great promotional tool for the SGOs, but also helps children with low self-confidence to 'preview' the event or festival before attending, to help reduce any anxiety levels.
- The SGOs really believe in the difference the Change4Life clubs and festivals can make to children, providing the 'safe' and fun environment that suits their confidence and competence levels. Therefore, the SGOs will build on the activities they offer this target group.
- New events in the pipeline include a Jingle Jog for Christmas, where children will be invited to come in Santa hats and Christmas jumpers, a 'Mini Mudder' for all age groups and a secondary orienteering event.



## TIPS

- Contact your local Forestry Commission to see how you can start working in partnership. If there isn't one local to you then look for alternative partners that are working in green spaces and aim to get more children into the outdoors. Ensure you combine both partners' aims.
- Don't always offer events in a sports hall. Ensure the facility, environment created and format of the event reflects the motivations, competence and confidence of the young people.
- Encourage more young people to be outside and visit their local parks, forests, etc. The more time they are outside, the more active they will be.
- As an SGO, don't focus all your events on 'sport' – think about encouraging 'physical activity' too.