

Investing in the Development of Young Female Sport Leaders: An Evaluation of the ‘Girls on the Move’ Leadership Programme

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### Abstract

This article explores the impact of the 'Girls on the Move' Leadership Programme in Scotland which was designed to develop young female sports leaders and to increase opportunities for girls to engage in sport and physical activity. The Programme was underpinned by several principles of youth leadership: (i) everyone can be a leader; (ii) young people can be leaders now; and (iii) youth leadership is concerned with matters of social justice. The evaluation used a multi-method approach (surveys, interviews, group discussions and observation) including a pre-course survey (n=289) and a 6-month follow-up survey (n=119) of leaders to assess change over time. Data obtained from the surveys show that the programme: attracted young women that might otherwise not have considered themselves as leaders; increased the number of young women taking on leadership roles; and increased sport and physical activity opportunities that were attractive to girls. The study showed that the economic contribution of the time the young women spent leading sport and physical activities over a six-month period was equivalent to the level of subsidy provided to put them through the leadership programme. The findings demonstrate that investing in the development of young female leaders can have a positive impact on individuals, community groups and can help address issues of social justice. Further investment in youth leadership in community sport may be an effective way of growing community sport and physical activity for girls, thus addressing issues of inequality.

*Keywords:* community sport; physical activity; young women, leadership, economic impact.

## Investing in the Development of Young Female Sport Leaders: An Evaluation of the ‘Girls on the Move’ Leadership Programme

Volunteers are central to the provision of community sport in Scotland and many other countries. Each week, thousands of sports coaches, teachers, instructors and leaders use their spare time to deliver a broad range of sport and physical activities through after-school clubs, sports clubs, community centres and youth clubs. Supported by national government, local government, national organisations and charities, community sport makes a substantial and important contribution to people’s quality of life and is an important source of physical activity for those that take part. Despite this network of opportunities, many children in Scotland do not reach the recommended levels of physical activity (60 minutes of moderate activity on most days of the week) (Scottish Executive, 2003). In particular, the sharp decline in level of physical activity among girls from the age of 10-11 is of particular concern because of the long-term negative health impacts of being physically inactive (Department of Health, Physical Activity, Health Improvement and Protection, 2011).

A range of factors have been identified as the reasons for the early decline in participation: girls’ dislike of competitive sport; a lack of perceived physical competence; poor body image; a reluctance to take part with boys; a lack of appropriate opportunities; and poor quality showering and changing facilities (Biddle, Coalter, O’Donovan, MacBeth, Nevill & Whitehead, 2005; **sportscotland**, 2006b). In a survey of girls, Biddle et al. (2005) also found that three-quarters considered there to be too few sporting opportunities available to them outside of school in their local community. In seeking to meet girls’ and young women’s demand for sport and physical activity, there is an identified need to increase the number of females in sports leadership positions in order to create opportunities that can motivate females to become more active (George Street Research, 2004; Inchley, Mitchell & Currie, 2011; **sportscotland**, 2006a).

As a result of the challenges identified with girls' participation in physical activity, the 'Girls on the Move' Programme was introduced to try to stimulate participation in sport and physical activity for girls across Scotland in community settings. This community-based physical activity intervention was established through a partnership between The Robertson Trust, an independent grant-making charitable trust, and the Scottish Executive Health Department (now known as The Scottish Government). The main aim of the Programme was to make physical activity more accessible to girls by removing barriers and creating opportunities for them to participate. The funding was used to build capacity in community groups to allow them to deliver sport and physical activity opportunities specifically for girls and young women.

Central to creating new opportunities was the need to identify and train young female leaders. Evidence suggests that finding adults willing to commit their time and take the responsibility to lead activities has been, and continues to be, a challenge (Taylor, et al., 2003; Reid Howie Associates, 2006). Arguments have been made that new child protection laws have hampered attempts at attracting adult leaders (Sport Wales, 2010) and that a lack of females in leadership roles in sport (e.g. coaching) means females do not see sport as a legitimate and viable career choice (George Street Research, 2004). However, a solution to addressing a lack of adult leaders is to recruit young people to become sport and physical activity leaders for other young people (Martinek & Hellison, 2009). This article examines to what extent the 'Girls on the Move' Leadership Programme has managed to recruit and deploy young women as sports leaders and assesses the contribution of young leaders to community sport. Furthermore, the article assesses the value of the programme by comparing the programme costs against estimates of the economic contribution of the young female leaders to delivering sport and physical activity in their communities.

This article adopts a broad definition of ‘community sport’. In addition to what would be considered as traditional team, partner and individual sports (e.g. football, tennis, athletics), other physical activities such as health and fitness activities (e.g. Pilates, yoga, aerobics), dance-based activities (e.g. street, jazz, hip-hop, contemporary) and outdoor pursuits (e.g. canoeing, skiing) are also included. It is necessary to include such a broad range of activities if community sport is to be inclusive of the interests and demands of girls and young women.

In this article both the terms ‘leader’ and ‘leadership’ are used. While the programme uses ‘leadership’ in its title and much of the literature refers to ‘youth leadership’, it would be more appropriate to acknowledge that the programme was concerned more with developing the young women as ‘leaders’, rather than developing ‘leadership’. According to Day (2000), leader development focuses more on human capital and individual capacities such as self-awareness, self-regulation and self-motivation, while leadership development is concerned more with social capital and relational capacities such as social awareness and social skills. While Day (2000) advocates the development of both leaders and leadership, it is appropriate when introducing young people to this field, to focus on individual leader skills, before dealing with more complex components of leadership.

### **Youth Leadership**

While the concept of leadership and the desire to understand leadership more comprehensively has been the focus of extensive leadership research for over 100 years (Antonakis, Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2004), in comparison, youth leadership has been largely ignored (MacNeil, 2006). Detailed understanding of the characteristics of youth leadership or the contribution young leaders can make to society is lacking in academic literature, despite the existence of many programmes that are designed to develop and foster leadership in young people (Klau, Boyd & Luckow, 2006). In a special edition of *New Directions for*

*Youth Development* on 'Youth Leadership', Klau et al. (2006) summarised the contributions of a range of authors and explained that there were seven issues and debates to consider with regard to youth leadership. Three of these are particularly pertinent to exploring the impact of youth leadership in the context of the 'Girls on the Move' Programme:

- 'Everyone can be a leader' versus 'A select few can be leaders'
- Youth as 'future leaders' versus youth as 'current leaders'
- The centrality of social justice to the discourse on youth leadership

### **'Everyone can be a Leader' versus 'A Select Few can be Leaders'**

The first of these three issues suggests that everyone can be a leader. Supporters of youth leadership (MacGregor, 2001; Wheeler & Edlebeck, 2006) are of the view all young people have the potential to explore and develop their skills as leaders and that leadership need not be the preserve of those with authority or those demonstrating exceptional traits. Schools are places in which a select few young people can obtain formal leadership roles (e.g. prefect, school captain, class president), but these positions are often awarded to pupils already demonstrating a range of skills and characteristics (e.g. inspirational, intelligent, charismatic) (Hellison, Martinek & Walsh, 2008), with the young people sometimes having to campaign to obtain votes or a nomination for such positions (MacGregor, 2001). Youth leadership, as viewed from a positive youth development perspective, is underpinned by the notion that all young people have the capacity to make a positive contribution to their environment and others through leadership activities, including those that might otherwise be overlooked and undervalued such as "at-risk-delinquents, special needs students, non-attenders, teen parents" (MacGregor, 2001). Kress (2006) argues that young people can make a significant contribution to society provided they are challenged and supported appropriately, and identifies youth leadership an effective way of challenging young people to develop and become valued citizens.

**Youth as ‘Future Leaders’ versus Youth as ‘Current Leaders’**

Commentators suggest youth leadership should not be about helping prepare young people to be the “leaders of tomorrow”, it should be about allowing them to be leaders today (Kress, 2006, p. 54). Wheeler and Edlebeck (2006) regarded young people as a “huge and often untapped reservoir of human energy, talent and vision” (p. 89) and that by engaging these young people in civic engagement they had the potential to stimulate change at an “individual, local and society level” (p. 89). If young people are to help create a more just society, then the chance to influence this as leaders needs to happen now, not at some undefined time in the future.

**The Centrality of Social Justice to the Discourse on Youth Leadership**

Youth leadership is associated with social justice (Libby, Sedonaen & Bliss, 2006; Wheeler & Edlebeck, 2006). For those working with young people in youth development contexts, developing leadership skills is about giving young people a voice and providing them the tools with which they can “work towards a more inclusive, equal and just society” (Klau et al., 2006, p. 4). Seeking ways in which to include young people in society is a key feature of youth leadership programmes.

These three themes of youth leadership were identifiable in the ‘Girls on the Move’ Leadership Programme where the aim was to address inequality in sport and physical activity provision for girls and young women in Scotland by training and mobilising young people who were interested in leading activities in their own communities.

**The ‘Girls on the Move’ Programme**

The ‘Girls on the Move’ Programme in Scotland, which was launched in 2005 and is still running over a decade later, was established (in part) in response to the 1998 Scottish Health Survey data that showed girls’ participation in physical activity declined dramatically between the ages of 10-11 and 14-15 (Scottish Executive, 2003). The Programme was

intended to provide more opportunities for girls to take part in physical activity in their local communities and was to be achieved through two distinct but related programmes: (i) The Participation Programme which provided grants to voluntary and community groups to run projects which were aimed at increasing physical activity levels among girls and young women, increasing girls' enjoyment of physical activity, and raising awareness of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle; and (ii) The Leadership Programme provided sport and dance leadership training courses for young women aged 14-25 to develop their skills allowing them to increase opportunities for girls to take part in organised physical activities in their local communities.

Although funded initially for a period of three years from 2005-2008 with a programme budget of £450,000, The Robertson Trust and the Scottish Government extended the funding for a further three years from 2008-2011. In Years 1 to 3, around £300,000 was committed to the Participation Programme and £150,000 to the Leadership Programme, although in Years 4 to 6, more of the programme budget was directed to the Leadership Programme. Since 2011 the Leadership Programme has continued to be delivered by Youth Scotland and is focused on developing young female leaders.

This article focuses on findings from the Leadership Programme and uses data obtained in Years 1 to 4. Further findings arising out of the intervention can be found in the summary reports and related articles (Taylor, 2008 and 2014; Taylor, Hughes & Koufaki, 2013; Youth Scotland, 2011).

### **The Leadership Courses**

The Leadership Programme provided opportunities for young women aged 14-25 with limited experience of leading activities to attend nationally recognised Sports Leader UK certificated courses, including the 'Award in Dance Leadership' (ADL) Level 1 (the most popular option among the participants) and the 'Award in Community Sports



Leadership' Levels 1 and 2. Most participants attended these leadership training courses on a five day intensive residential basis, although some attended courses that were delivered on a non-residential basis in their communities over an eight to ten week period. Young women were recruited to the courses through their involvement in community groups, primarily youth clubs. Some individuals attended courses held at their own group, but for most course participants they travelled to a course joining other young women from across Scotland.

The Leadership Programme was supplemented with other shorter leadership courses including the One Day Sports Leader Certificate, TOP Sport and Tribal Groove training courses. The introduction of the shorter courses later in the programme was to create a more gradual and developmental approach to encouraging young women into leading activities as it was found that starting on the five day residential course was too demanding for some. In addition to the courses, the young women were supported in a variety of ways by national and local stakeholders through mentoring, sharing information, support from more experienced leaders and further training opportunities.

### **Evaluation Approach**

The Leadership Programme was evaluated over a four year period using an eclectic evaluation approach (Stufflebeam and Coryn, 2014) that incorporated a range of research methods. The components of the evaluation that investigated the development of young female sports leaders included quantitative research methods (surveys) and qualitative research methods (interviews, groups discussions, observation). The principal method of assessing the impact of the Leadership Programme was surveys. Course participants were asked to complete a questionnaire prior to commencing the training course and six-months after attending the course. The other key stakeholders included in the evaluation were course organisers who were responsible for organising venues and recruiting the participants and

course tutors who delivered the leadership training courses. This article presents the findings of the surveys but also draws on interview findings where appropriate.

### **Pre-Course Survey and Six-Month Follow-Up Survey**

Over the first four years of the programme, 382 young women attended a leadership training course of which 289 were included in the pre-course survey (76% of course participants) (see Table 1). A total of 119 completed questionnaires were returned from participants around six-months after they were involved in the training courses – a response rate of 35 per cent. Of all the questionnaires received, 98 were matched, that is to say that the same course participant completed a pre-course survey and a follow-up questionnaire. Findings were used from these three data sets. In some analysis it was appropriate to report on the findings of all respondents that completed a pre-course questionnaire, or from all respondents that returned a follow-up questionnaire. In other cases it was more appropriate to report findings from the matched data set where more accurate before and after changes were being reported.

### **Visits to Training Courses and Interviews with Stakeholders**

Visits were also made to the leadership training courses where interviews were undertaken with course organisers and course tutors. These interviews were used to gather these stakeholders' views on a broad range of aspects associated with the programme including administration, course content, learning outcomes, motivation of leaders towards leading activities and expectations for the future. Follow-up face-to-face and telephone conversations were undertaken with these stakeholders and community managers after the training courses were delivered. Group discussions were also undertaken with young women during the leadership training courses exploring their experiences of being involved in the training and their expectations and aspirations for the future. It is important to note that the evaluation established that the participants were generally very positive about their

experiences of taking part in the courses and indicated that the course had developed their leadership knowledge and skill levels. Almost all of the participants (97%) indicated that the course had met their expectations, which included learning leadership skills and increasing their confidence.

### **The Course Participants**

The mean age of young women at the beginning of the course was 17.2 years ( $SD \pm 2.66$ ), ranging from 14 to 29 years of age (see Table 1). A very small number of young women were older than the 14-25 age range, but were permitted to continue on the programme. They came from many areas of Scotland: urban and rural, including the main cities and western and northern isles; they included school pupils (62%) and school leavers (38%); of those that had left school many were at college (25%) or university (10%), were working full-time (16%) or part-time (15%), or were unemployed (18%); some were young mums (8%); and they came from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds, although as was the intention of the programme design, this included a slightly higher proportion of young women from more deprived communities in Scotland (25% were from the 20% of most deprived areas of Scotland). The rationale for targeting more deprived areas was to address issues of the lack of opportunities for girls to take part in organised physical activities in these communities.

Course participants were physically active individuals, with 71 per cent having participated in dance in the four weeks before attending a course, 66 per cent in individual sport and 35 per cent in team sports. A high proportion of course participants (78%) took part in physical activities as members of organised groups, the most popular being with youth clubs (40%), sports clubs (35%) and after school clubs (33%).

### **Findings and Analysis**

This section reports findings on: the number of activity leaders recruited, trained and deployed as leaders; assesses the contribution of leaders in terms of their frequency of leading activities; considers their time commitment to delivering activities; and estimates the economic contribution leaders made to their local communities.

### **Increasing the Number of Sport and Physical Activity Leaders**

The follow-up survey found that 59 per cent of leaders had acted as a leader since taking part in a course. Based on all those that attended a course (n=382), it is estimated that around 225 young women had been active as leaders in the six-month period following their course, 180 of whom indicated leading activity sessions at least once per week since completing the course (see Table 1). It should be noted however that this figure assumes that the profile of non-respondents to the surveys were similar to respondents. The evaluation established that this might be the case because telephone interviews with some survey non-respondents found that many had also taken on leadership roles since finishing a course, but had chosen not to complete the follow-up questionnaire.

Table 1

#### *Demographic and activity status of Leadership Programme course participants*

| <b>Course participants</b>                           | <b>n=</b>          |
|--|--------------------|
| Total number of course participants                  | 382                |
| Number that were active as leaders before the course | 160                |
| Number that were active as leaders after the course  | 225                |
| Number that were new to leading activities           | 65                 |
| <b>Age of course participants (years)</b>            |                    |
| Average age of participants (years)                  | 17.2 yrs (SD±2.66) |
| Oldest   | 29 years           |
| Youngest   | 14 years           |
| <i>Base number</i>                                   | 288                |
| <b>School status</b>                                 | <b>%</b>           |
| Still at school                                      | 62                 |
| No longer at school                                  | 38                 |
| <i>Base number</i>                                   | 288                |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Work status<sup>a</sup></b>  | <b>%</b>   |
| At university   | 10         |
| At college  | 25         |
| Working full-time   | 16         |
| Working part-time   | 15         |
| Unemployed  | 18         |
| Bringing up children  | 17         |
| At home   | 2          |
| <i>Base number</i>  | <i>110</i> |
| <b>Motherhood</b>   | <b>%</b>   |
| Young mums  | 8          |
| <i>Base number</i>  | <i>278</i> |
| <b>Activities participated in the 4 weeks before the course<sup>a</sup></b> | <b>%</b>   |
| Dance   | 71         |
| Individual sports   | 66         |
| Partner sports  | 15         |
| Team sports   | 35         |
| Health activities   | 18         |
| Outdoor activities  | 13         |
| <i>Base number</i>  | <i>286</i> |

*Note.* <sup>a</sup>Multiple response – figures do not sum to 100%

Although over two hundred young women were active as leaders, these were not all *new* leaders. A substantial proportion of course participants (42% - around 160 participants) indicated that they had been leading activities in the six-months prior to joining the course. Based on these figures, it is estimated that around 65 young women were introduced to leading activities as a result of the programme. While this may appear rather modest, the findings of the overall evaluation showed that the training was extremely important to those that had previous experience of leading. Most (84%) had no formal leader or leadership training prior to attending the course; for most, the ‘Girls on the Move’ Leadership Programme represented their first formal introduction to leader training.

### **Contexts in which Leaders Delivered Physical Activities**

The course graduates delivered activities in a number of different contexts in the six-months after attending the course. The most common was in after-school clubs (51%) (with

a further 10% leading within school time) or through youth groups/clubs (38%), but also included leaders delivering activities in sports clubs (15%), leisure/arts centres (10%) and other contexts (17%) (see Table 2). The percentage of course graduates delivering activities in community sports clubs doubled from six per cent to 15 per cent during the course of the programme, but largely sport remained less attractive than dance-based activities. The findings of the evaluation reflect broader research into girls' participation in physical activity where sport appeals less to girls than it does to boys (**sportscotland**, 2008).

### **Reaching Out to the Community**

The follow-up survey revealed that the leaders not only worked with girls, but their activities were also attended by boys, women and men. The leaders that were involved in leading activities at least once per week indicated that on average 22.7 people attended their sessions each week. Based on these figures it is estimated that the active leaders reached around 3,000 people in their local communities on a weekly basis (see Table 2). Most of these were girls (69%) but also included boys (25%), women (6%) and men (<1%). The findings indicated that the Leadership Programme was reaching out to others in the community beyond the girls' and their peers.

Table 2

*Course graduates' involvement in leading activities after attending a 'Girls on the Move'*

*Leadership Programme course*

| <b>Frequency of leading activities</b>                      | <b>%</b>  |
|---|-----------|
| Once per week or more                                       | 79        |
| Once per month  | 3         |
| Less than once per month                                    | 19        |
| <i>Base number</i>  | <i>70</i> |
| <b>Type of activities delivered as leaders <sup>a</sup></b> | <b>%</b>  |
| Dance   | 74        |
| Individual sports   | 27        |
| Partner sports  | 6         |
| Team sports   | 19        |
| Health activities   | 4         |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Outdoor activities  | 10        |
| <i>Base number</i>  | <i>70</i> |
| <b>Contexts for leading activities<sup>a</sup></b>                          | <b>%</b>  |
| After-school club   | 51        |
| In school time  | 10        |
| Youth club  | 38        |
| Sports club   | 15        |
| Leisure/arts centre   | 10        |
| Other contexts  | 17        |
| <b>Reach of young leaders in 6 months after course</b>                      | <b>n=</b> |
| Mean number of participants attending leaders' sessions per week            | 22.7      |
| Estimated total number of participants attending leaders' sessions per week | 2,985     |

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*Note.* <sup>a</sup>Multiple response – figures do not sum to 100%

It is not surprising that the graduates had reached more girls. Several of the leaders interviewed about their involvement stated that they were more comfortable working with younger girls, as this was a less threatening group with which to work. One leader explained: "I prefer working with the younger girls because they get more into the activities. It is more challenging working with the older ones." (Course graduate)

During the course, many of them found leading practical sessions with peers their own age to be a frightening or nerve wracking experience. However, all of those interviewed indicated that they had enjoyed leading these practice sessions and that this gave them confidence to work with groups in their communities. One interviewee commented:

My confidence in teaching people as well as my motivation to do this has very much increased. ...Here, I have improved my dance and aerobics skills but which is even more important: I've learnt how to teach those skills. (Course graduate)

The higher proportion of girls taking part in activities delivered by the newly trained leaders is important in terms of helping address unequal provision of sport and physical activities for girls. If new female leaders can reach higher proportions of girls, then interventions of this type have the potential to address the lack of opportunities for girls.

**Estimated reach beyond the six-month period after the course.** The evaluation only gathered quantitative data about the reach of graduates in the six-month period following their involvement in the course. However, it is known that some young leaders continued to lead activities two and three years after taking part in a course. Although further follow-up surveys were not undertaken (beyond 6-months), it is very likely that some course graduates will have reached many more people in their communities.

### **Commitment to Leading Activities**

The follow-up survey sought to gather information that would allow an estimate of the economic contribution of leaders' activity to their local communities. Of those that had been active as leaders since attending the course, three-quarters (74%) were active in the four weeks prior to the survey, four-fifths (79%) claimed to lead activities at least once per week or more, with the remainder (22%) leading once per month or less. The time contribution of some of these individuals was substantial. On average, leaders delivered 3.1 hours of activity per week after taking part in the course, although it should be noted that the number of hours per week ranged from one hour up to 16 hours. Fourteen per cent indicated that they delivered over five hours of activity per week, although the largest proportion (57%) delivered up to two hours of activity per week.

Interestingly, the amount of time spent leading activities was on average, higher for those leading in the six-months before attending the course (3.4 hours; n=109), compared to the time spent leading in the six-months after the course (3.0 hours; n=68). Using paired data (n=30), the difference between the mean time spent leading activities before attending the course (3.8 hours per week) and six-months after (3.2 hours) was not statistically significant ( $t(29) = 1.247, p = .222$ ). These findings suggest that attending training does not necessary lead to existing leaders increasing the amount of time they spend leading activities,



although programme managers hoped that the training will improve the quality of activity sessions delivered (the quality of activity delivered was not assessed during this evaluation).

### **Economic Contribution of Leadership Course Graduates**

Using the frequency of leading activities (for those that lead activities at least once per week), the mean time spent leading activities (3.1 hours per week) and assuming an hourly rate of £10-£15 (based on staff rates claimed in 'Girls on the Move' Participation Programme applications), it is estimated that the weekly economic contribution of active leaders was £31-£46.50 per week, equivalent to £800-£1,200 over a six-month period. This is likely to be an over estimate given that activity sessions are usually interrupted for holidays/breaks. This amount is similar to the £900 subsidy per participant on the Leadership Programme. For all active leaders from the Leadership Programme over four years (n=180), it is estimated that the total economic contribution of graduate leaders was £144,000-£216,000. It should be recognised that these figures assume that the rate of involvement in leading activities was the same for respondents and non-respondents to the follow-up survey.

This estimate covers only the six-month period following the courses. While the above figures may over estimate the economic contribution of leaders (i.e. it does not account for holidays/breaks taken by leaders in that time), the estimates have not taken into account the economic contribution made by leaders who continued leading after the six-month survey period. It is known that some of the young women who took part in the first courses were still leading activities two years later, with some providing support to later courses. This means that the economic contribution of some leaders would amount to several thousands of pounds, far in excess of the subsidy to take them through the leadership programme.

### **Experiences in Leading Activities**

One-quarter (25%) of the young leaders indicated that they were the ‘main leader (on own)’ at the sessions they delivered (including dance or sport), a further 42 per cent indicated they were the ‘main leader (with assistance)’, with the remainder (33%) having acted as an ‘assistant leader’. It was of some concern to a small number of programme managers and leadership course tutors that course graduates were leading activities on their own, because they were not convinced the young people had the experience and expertise to design and lead activities. One course graduate that was interviewed some months after finishing the course commented that while there was a youth worker on hand during the sessions she delivered, she was the “dance expert” despite having no other formal dance qualifications/certificates. One experienced dance tutor indicated that the Award in Dance Leadership (Level 1) was designed to help prepare course participants to *assist* an experienced dance teacher in leading classes, but it does not prepare individuals to lead dance unsupervised. Although the tutor considered the ADL to be a very good training resource, they explained: “I don’t think it is long enough to give girls the amount of knowledge and experience needed to be a dance teacher.” (Course Tutor)

While some young women had a strong background in dance, it was apparent from some of the visits to courses that many had not been trained previously in dance, and that to have the responsibility for leading activities without being supervised by an appropriately experienced person was not regarded as ideal. One course graduate highlighted a limitation with the leadership course in terms of becoming a main leader, rather than taking on a supporting role:

If you think about it all we’ve done is 10 minutes, 15 minutes [of leading]... it doesn’t really count [be]cause you didn’t have to take a whole class. ...you either did a warm-up, middle part or end part, and so what are you supposed to do about the other two parts you haven’t done before? (Course graduate)

While this may raise some concerns, it is also positive in that some of the young leaders felt that they were comfortable enough at taking on the role of main leader. Despite concerns, the tutor considered the course to be a good introduction to prospective dance leaders, but would support the leaders taking further dance specific training to ensure that their knowledge-base ensures appropriate dance content.

Some of the young leaders (22%) had undertaken further training in the six-months since attending the leadership course, including sports specific Leader/Level 1 courses (athletics, football, hockey, rugby), outdoor activity (rock climbing instructor), fitness and dance (boxercise, Tribal Groove) and generic courses (first aid, safeguarding and protecting children). Four-fifths (80%) indicated they wanted to obtain further certificates/qualifications, one-half of whom wanted to continue their development with dance and exercise to music, with around one-third wanting to gain a sports certificate/qualification.

### **Discussion**

The evidence collected during the evaluation demonstrated that there were a range of positive outcomes connected to the Leadership Programme: it contributed to the number of female leaders delivering community sport and physical activity; it helped developed those that had existing leadership experience; it increased opportunities for others in communities to take part in activities; it increased the capacity of groups to provide opportunities; and it can be credited with making a positive economic contribution to local communities. These findings demonstrated that the 'Girls on the Move' Leadership Programme addresses a number of key principles of youth leadership summarised by Klau et al. (2006).

### **Opening Leadership for All to Try**

While some hold the principle that 'everyone can be a leader', not everyone involved in the programme became a leader. Despite taking part, some lacked a desire to be a leader,

some experience barriers to being a leader (e.g. other commitments, not affiliated to a group), and some lacked the range of skills, abilities or confidence needed to become a successful or confident leader. The skills required to be a leader are extensive (e.g. social, cognitive, activity specific knowledge and experience) and many of the course participants did not like leading or found their skills in the activity (e.g. dance) to be insufficient to lead effectively. These need not be regarded as poor or disappointing outcomes for the programme. It is unlikely that any programme will meet the needs of all that take part (Pawson, 2013), but even for those that did not subsequently lead activities, many enjoyed the taking part and there were positive impacts in terms of personal and social development (Taylor, 2014).

The open and inclusive recruitment approach resulted in a diverse range of young women being encouraged and supported into leader roles. The Leadership Programme succeeded in recruiting young women that might otherwise be overlooked for leadership positions. For example, five teenage mums joined the programme, one of whom at the time was still at school, some claimed to have a disability (although some described conditions that affected them only ‘some of the time’) and a few programme organisers described working with some young women that required high levels of technical and emotional support. The programme not only attracted those that had already demonstrated leadership potential, but it attracted young women who initially doubted their ability to lead. This lack of doubt was found to be widespread, which suggests that young women should be encouraged to try leader or leadership roles even if they have not considered it before, or are unsure of their abilities. There may exist a potentially large and untapped number of young women capable of becoming community sport and physical activity leaders.

### **Young Female Leaders Now and in the Future**

The principle that young people have the capacity to lead now, rather than develop leaders for the future, was also demonstrated through the programme. This programme, and

others (Wheeler & Edlebeck, 2006), have demonstrated that young people can become active and valuable leaders within their communities. The young female leaders in this programme made a direct and valuable contribution to their communities through being active leaders. Some of the activities delivered would not have happened had the young women not been given the chance to put into practice their skills as leaders.

Although the emphasis of the programme was on getting young women active as leaders from as young as 14 years of age, the programme also has the potential to build knowledge and practical foundation on which the participating young women can develop their leader and leadership skills that can be utilised later in life. Creating good, or even great, leaders is a challenging task. Public, private and voluntary sector organisations large and small invest a substantial amount of resources (financial and time) into developing competent and inspirational leaders that will drive forward their operations. In this respect, providing young women with the knowledge, skills and positive experiences to lead at an early age, may give them a positive advantage when opportunities to lead become available in later years. If the lack of females in many senior leadership roles is to be addressed, providing positive leader experiences when they are young could become an important step in breaking the under-representation of senior female leaders in business (EY, 2013) and sport (George Street Research, 2004).

### **Addressing Issues of Social Justice**

A desire for social justice underpins the Leadership Programme. It was designed to address two of the major imbalances that exist in sport and physical activity in Scotland, imbalances which are evident in many developed countries: (i) the poor level of female participation in sport compared to males, and (ii) the low numbers of females in sport leadership positions. Furthermore, the programme sought to address these problems by not viewing young people as a problem to be solved, but by recognising the potential of young

people to be a valuable resource to society (Wheeler & Edlebeck, 2006). Here the solution to the imbalances may lie in a young leader volunteer workforce. The programme theory suggested that by providing young women with the necessary training and support, they would be encouraged into becoming activity leaders, they would strengthen the capacity of youth groups to provide opportunities for girls to take part in sport and physical activities, which in turn may help to arrest the decline in girls' participation in physical activity, and overcome a clear imbalance in supply of sporting and physical activity opportunities for females. While this is an over simplification of the programme theory (see Taylor, 2008 for further detail of the programme theory) and does not address contextual factors and mechanisms that could make the programme work, the findings suggest the programme theory works. However, the scale of the programme was not sufficient enough in itself to impact directly on national participation rates. However, the principle of the programme (i.e. utilising young leaders to support community-based activity) demonstrated that young leaders have the potential to make substantial contributions to community sport provision and to address inequalities in sport and physical activity provision in Scottish communities.

### **Conclusions**

The findings of the evaluation suggest that youth leaders have the potential to make a substantial contribution to the provision of opportunities for members of communities to take part in community sport and physical activity. Although the scale of the 'Girls on the Move' Leadership Programme was not of a sufficient scale to make a difference to national sport and physical activity participation rates, the findings show that the delivery model works and has the potential to address issues of inequality. Ostensibly, further investment in youth leadership in community sport may be an effective way of growing community sport, addressing issues of inequality, encouraging greater engagement of youth in community

settings and promoting active citizenship. For potential funders of leadership programmes, undertaking a cost-benefit assessment may support decisions to invest.

Programmes of this nature can provide young women with their first experiences of being a leader. If participation in sport has the potential to provide women with leadership experiences that can impact positively on their careers (EY, 2013), then sport and physical activity youth leadership programmes also have the potential to advance the leadership skills of young women at an early stage. This may allow them to make greater advances in leadership roles in sport and in other areas of business and public life.

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