



# JOURNAL

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# MAKE TIME FOR PE

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# President Update: Finding Purpose in SATPE

Dominic Tollan,  
SATPE President



My own experiences of PE at school were varied. We were among the lucky ones to be granted visiting specialist PE teachers in primary school as part of the Renfrewshire project, unfortunately cut due to lack of funding.

Our PE teacher wasn't

the best role model – maybe a story best left for another day. He didn't put on any clubs or teams. We would get the keys from the janitor's office after school and play basketball, gymnastics, indoor football in the small gym. Health and safety alert nowadays would definitely not allow that!

My later experiences of PE started to shape my journey. I picked Higher PE in S6, which we had to take at another school as it was something our small school didn't provide. I could see my pathway starting to form and when it came to where I was going next. I started to look at courses that reflected my new found enjoyment of PE and sport, which took me through a 4 year honours degree and Postgraduate PE qualification.

It hasn't been plain sailing. I encountered health difficulties, challenges on placement, at one stage being told I would "never be a teacher" and even as a teacher encountering challenging classes, PT's and all the challenges that life brings on top of that. But on the other hand, I had those who supported me, family, friends, teachers, colleagues, peers who encouraged, praised and helped steer me in the right direction.

All of this support and the positive experiences helped me to find a sense of **purpose** in what I was doing. Seeing where I wanted to go, what I wanted

to do. It is a journey that has seen me coach abroad, teach PE in Primary, Secondary and ASN settings, establish solid friendship groups, name a school, speak at national conferences and of course, gave me the honour of becoming SATPE President. If I can do that, why can't anyone else reading this do the same or better?

## My purpose as President?

I want to help make sure that no pupil received the poor PE experiences I received. That they have opportunities to find what they enjoy, what they are good at, and what would shape their physical activity habits for life. To give them their sense of purpose.

I want to help make sure that no student teacher feels isolated or alone, finds support, help and advice when they needed it most and to let their sense of purpose, why they wanted to become a teacher, help them into the profession to carry that through.

I want to help make sure that no teacher feels aimless or lost amid the daily challenges we face, to focus on the positives, to work together, to remember why we are doing what we do every day, to help give our young people purpose, and shape their lives for the better and to enjoy the fact that we are so lucky to have the opportunity to teach such a fantastic subject.

And in doing so, helping to find purpose in what we do every day as educators.

Since the last Conference, SATPE have been involved in a range of initiatives which have helped the Association continue to grow. And this is down to the hard work and purpose shown by those in the SATPE Committee who have gone over and above in their spare time to grow the association.

### Since the last conference we have:

- Launched our first ever national campaign: Make Time for PE
- Put together another fantastic range of SATPE Webinars, available to all members.
- Put together a brand new SATPE Podcast
- Given students and teachers across Scotland the chance to showcase their research, thoughts and ideas in the SATPE Journal
- Worked together with Active Scotland to launch a partnership initiative, producing a schools pack for Active Women and Girls Week
- Established brand new partnerships with organisations and companies to help take forward initiatives and offer benefits to members.
- Launched the Karen McCubbin Primary PE fund to give a school the chance to invest in primary PE
- Introduced the SATPE Legacy fund, that schools can access for young people who need support in their PE and sport journey
- Introduced the new SATPE SHINE Award

We hope that these initiatives have gone some way to help **Promote** PE across Scotland, **Support** the delivery of quality PE and **Provide** the resources and teacher voice necessary to provide you with your own sense of **Purpose** in everything you do. We want to continue to build the SATPE Community to make sure no one feels alone, to strengthen our voice as a profession and watch PE in Scotland continue to go from strength to strength.

If that sense of purpose leads you to want to do more, please get in touch and join us on our SATPE journey. Write an article, join a working group, send us ideas, volunteer, use us to help give you a voice and a way to make a positive change for the profession.

Thank you for your ongoing hard work and support of SATPE

**Dom Tollan**  
SATPE President

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**Dr Joe Cowley**, Lecturer, University of Stirling  
and **Brodie Runciman**, Lecturer, University of Edinburgh



# Satpe Journal Contributors



**SATPE Conference  
2025 Welcomes**

# Jack Carlin

Olympic Silver & Bronze Medallist  
in Track Cycling

**We are delighted to announce that Olympic silver and bronze medallist Jack Carlin will be joining us as our keynote guest at the SATPE Annual Conference 2025.**

Jack is one of Scotland's most successful track cyclists, representing Great Britain and Team Scotland on the world stage. With multiple World Championship podiums and Commonwealth medals, he continues to inspire the next generation of athletes with his dedication, resilience, and passion for sport.

At this year's conference, Jack will take part in a Q&A session where delegates will hear first-hand about his journey from school PE to the Olympic velodrome, the challenges he's faced along the way, and the lessons he has learned about teamwork, perseverance, and sporting excellence.

You can follow Jack on his social media accounts  
**Instagram :** [@jackcarlin97](#)  
**X:** [@jack\\_carlin97](#)

# Sheli McCoy

## Q&A

Gym owner, weightlifting champion and star of BBC Show Gladiators.

### Background & Experience

Sheli attended school in Fife, starting off at Ceres Primary school and then attending Bell Baxter High School in Cupar. She graduated with a Master's degree from Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen. Having competed in Weightlifting and CrossFit Championships globally, Sheli became Scottish champion in both sports. In 2023 she set three new Scottish records in Olympic Weightlifting at the Scottish Championships, ranking her the fourth-highest athlete from the UK.

Sheli owns and operates SweatBox gym in Dundee which encompasses both CrossFit Dundee and the Scottish Weightlifting Club. The gym offers a range of classes from CrossFit and Olympic weightlifting to beginner and children's classes. Sheli has over 10 years' experience as a personal and CrossFit trainer. She specialises as a weightlifting coach and sports rehabilitation therapist.

### What are your experiences of PE growing up in Scotland? (Primary/Secondary, positive/negative/funny)

Growing up I loved PE and would often prioritise it over other subjects. This often resulted in having to do homework and catch-up sessions having spent too long in the PE department!

I had some really inspiring teachers throughout school and most of these were from the PE department. They taught me the values of discipline, work ethic, focus and self-belief alongside developing my motor skills and physical fitness. This learning stayed with me as I went to College. My further studies focussed on sport purely because I had admired my PE teachers so much. I loved learning about health and fitness as well as taking part in it too.



### What PE activities did you like the most/least at school? Why?

I loved hockey at school and went on to play it at University.

I hated the 12-minute run; it's Scotland and it's freezing! I have always had a strength-based body type so running was never easy for me.

### What impact, if any, did your PE teachers have on you?

I studied sports coaching at Elmwood College purely because of my PE teachers. Later, my College Sports coach became a very good mentor and friend and attended my University graduation years later.

### How much did PE and sport/fitness play a part in your younger life? Did this influence your future career pathway?

I prioritised PE, sports and fitness over my studies. I used to ride horses morning and night with my mum, so sport was in my family. However, I never thought that one day I would own a gym or be a sports coach.

### Who/What inspired you to follow your current career pathway? Who have been your main role models?

My Mum has been a major role model and constant support system for me. She encouraged a strong work ethic and dedication towards my goals.

At school, my PE teacher Mr Moffat was always championing my success.

I remember his encouragement and the knowledge he would offer in sports skills and techniques.

Ian McClain from Elmwood College was the biggest driver for me to go to University and work towards my degree and Masters. He gave me so much of his time and really inspired me to be a leader. He taught me to be focused, punctual, and a sports coach who would inspire others.

### **How do you think your role as a Gladiator can help to inspire young people, especially young females to be fit and active?**

Being a gladiator has given me a platform to share my stories and offer advice on how to overcome some of the challenges of being a female in the sporting world. Being a role model means showing others what can be possible even against challenges. It also means I'm now able to show that women can be strong, athletic, feminine and display good sportsmanship in the face of both victory and defeat. Being a gladiator is so much more than just being an entertaining athlete - it's about being motivating, inspiring and REAL - real bodies, real people and real results from hard work.

### **Do you have any words of advice/inspiration for young people in Scotland?**

Never stop believing - anything is possible.

Show up for yourself.

Focus on who you want to become and start to include the things you think that person would do. Would your future-self be healthy? Then choose the healthy foods you think they would have instead of unhealthy snacks that an unhealthy person would have.

### **Do you have any words of advice for any young person looking to follow your career pathway in fitness?**

As a young person I think you need to do a range of sports and build both a strong body and a strong mind. That's what you will inspire others with when you grow up into a coach or athlete.

### **Do you have any words of advice/inspiration for PE teachers in Scotland?**

Kids SEE better than they HEAR.

Instead of telling them to warm up and move better - show them how. Lead and role-model the behaviours you want to instil. The teachers that impacted me most inspired me by showing me, not telling me from the sidelines.

### **Your gym runs fitness classes for young people. What does this involve and do you have any favourite activities or exercises you think would be great for use in PE classes?**

The kids classes are all about fun, engaging in functional movements, and learning how to do the basics well. Technique is important for functional movements such as lifting from the floor, squatting and press-ups. Technique work is always followed by sweaty, fast paced games working on coordination and agility as well as stamina and strength.

### **What do you think we can do to better promote positive messages about PE and fitness, especially for girls?**

I think it needs to be a gender immaterial approach. It shouldn't be hockey for girls and rugby for boys ... Both genders play both sports at the Olympics but schools offer one or the other - that doesn't seem to make sense.

Everyone needs to be reminded that a human body can be fit, fast, strong, agile and impressive, no matter where they start or what gender they are.

### **What PE activities would you recommend to anyone wanting to be a Gladiator?**

Every activity. Learn to run, jump, lift weights, swim, score goals, climb.

Being a gladiator means you are a person with a high level of skill in several sports. It's so fun learning them as you grow up - it's a great way to spend your weekends and spare time.

### **What is your favourite current Gladiators event, and if you were back in school just now, what event would you love your PE teacher to set up for a lesson?**

I love THE EDGE. It's high, it's scary, and I know up there I'm Queen of the high rails.

I would have my PE teachers and their class join in on a Powerball game, it's accessible and floor based, people learn valuable strategy tactics to evade their opponents. Because it's so fast and fun you burn so much energy. The bonus is research shows the more activity kids do the more responsive to learning they are. WIN WIN.

**You can find out more about Sheli on Instagram: @Sheli\_Mccoyofficial**

# Kin-ball: Fast Fun, for Everyone!

Stephen Grace, Director, Kin-ball UK

**Kin-ball for schools is fantastic, the ball is so unique it engages pupils straight away, but that's just the start of the appeal.**

Inclusive is an overused term in sport, and it's rarely used correctly. To be truly inclusive in sport, players of all abilities and disabilities should be able to play together while the game still has integrity. Kin-ball is a sport for everyone where the team can only achieve successes when they work together.

Yes, Kin-ball can be selective, with representative opportunities available at a European Championship and World Cup, but the true nature of the sport is its three team structure and rules which ensure full involvement for all players on court.



## What do you need to add Kin-ball to your curriculum?

One or two Kin-balls, a pump to inflate them (normal ball pumps can't inflate our giant ball). For games a three team scoreboard is recommended.

That's all; no extra expense of nets, posts, backboards etc!

## How do you play Kin-ball?

Simply keep the giant ball off the floor!

Three teams of four players take to the playing area. When a team is 'designated', players need to react quickly to stop the ball from hitting the floor, using any body part. The ball must be secured by the team in a set position ready to be struck and the next team called out, all in a time limit of 10 seconds.

## How do you score points?

When the ball hits the floor, the two non-designated teams are awarded a point each. The same applies if the ball is hit out of bounds.

Taking turns as the hitter must be shared among the players. When hitting contact is made all other players must be supporting the ball which ensures full involvement.

As possession is targeted and not taken, it prevents the fastest and strongest dominating the game.

## Why Kin-ball?

The craft of the game is reacting quickly as a team and working cooperatively. Games tend to be close and the scoring mechanism prevents any wide disparities.

As well as a brilliant sport for all ages, the ball can also be used in creating multiple outcomes. Kin-ball UK & Omnikin have created a range of activities with the outcomes of increased physical activity, team building and cooperation as well as tactical development. Kin-ball can enhance PE lessons especially for those students who can be demotivated by traditional sports.

Join the Kin-ball revolution!



# 1Wall

Dan Thackeray,  
Development Manager Wallball UK



## What is 1Wall UK?

Wallball is a Sport for Every Student. A Game for Every Space.

Inspired by the high-energy courts of New York City, where American Handball has been a cultural staple for over a century, 1Wall UK brings that same passion and simplicity to the UK, with a unique educational and community-driven mission. At its core, 1Wall is a dynamic, hand-eye coordination sport where players strike a ball against a wall using their hands. It's fast-paced, adaptable, and crucially requires minimal space, equipment, or cost, making it ideal for schools, youth clubs, and urban communities.

## Background

Traditional sports often require costly infrastructure, limiting who can participate. 1Wall breaks down these barriers with its simplicity and low setup cost, enabling us to bring sport into areas where other forms of physical activity may be inaccessible or excluded.

In many areas, young people lack access to positive extracurricular activities that foster life skills and confidence. 1Wall offers a platform to develop teamwork, resilience, and leadership through sport. We also provide pathways for young people to train as coaches or community leaders, helping to bridge opportunity gaps and support personal development.

A major concern in the UK is the growing level of physical inactivity, particularly among young people and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. 1Wall encourages active participation through fun, fast-paced play that appeals to a wide age range. Its accessibility means it can be introduced in schools, community centres, and public spaces without the need for expensive facilities, helping to improve physical and mental wellbeing across diverse populations.

## A Game for Every School

1Wall UK's mission is to bring this sport to every school in the country. Through workshops, training for teachers, and easy-to-install courts, 1Wall is transforming blank playground walls into vibrant hubs of activity and inclusion. It's more than just a sport, it's a movement towards healthier, happier, and more active school environments.

So, the next time you pass a blank wall in the playground, imagine the possibilities. With 1Wall, that wall isn't just a wall. It's an opportunity.

For more information visit [www.ukwallball.co.uk](http://www.ukwallball.co.uk)



# Early Years PE

**Helen Battelley**, Chair of National Early Years Active Start Partnership

Every day, media reports highlight concerns about young children's increasing physical inactivity, rising obesity, declining mental health, and shrinking opportunities for daily physical play. *The UK Physical Activity and Health Report (2022)* warns of dire consequences if this trend continues. As Baroness Frances D'Souza writes, "Without effective, co-ordinated measures led by Government, we run the risk that the next generation of adults will be the least healthy in living memory."

Physical proficiency in early childhood plays a crucial role in building children's confidence and engagement, fostering positive physical activity behaviours that last into later life. Early childhood is a pivotal stage for brain and body development, and adults play a critical role in shaping children's physical growth.

Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) acquired during early childhood are the building blocks for more advanced movement competencies. Their acquisition, practice, and refinement ensure long-term interest and participation in various physical activities. These skills also contribute to learning across all areas of development.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted children's physical development, with the effects still lingering today. Alarming, only 9% of children aged 2-4 meet the recommended daily physical activity levels (British Heart Foundation Research Centre, 2018). Research by La Valle et al. (2022) found that young children faced challenges adapting to new situations and socialising after extended periods indoors, leading to increased sedentary behaviour and hindered physical development.

Experts in early years physical development are

advocating for a renewed focus on play-based approaches to best support children's physical activity and development. An article in *The Lancet* by Kolehmainen et al. (2023) stresses the need for inclusivity, stating that "Advancing the rights of all children to participate in physical activity requires inclusive, equally ambitious, expectations for all."

One initiative tackling these challenges is the Physical Activity Adventure Pack (PAAP), which provides a full year of developmentally appropriate lesson plans for Reception (Foundation Stage) children. The PAAP is based on the premise that physical activity is essential for all children to live happy, healthy, and active lives. It has been carefully designed to support inclusive practice and accommodate children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) as well as those learning English as an additional language.

The PAAP offers numerous opportunities for children to engage in physical movement both indoors and outdoors, through a mix of adult-directed and child-led activities. These activities promote movement skills, body management, and object control, while fostering a love for movement through playful experiences.

Each activity card within the PAAP provides adaptive teaching methods tailored to meet the needs of all children, regardless of their abilities. The pack contains six units of work designed to be delivered throughout the academic year:

1. Fundamental Movement Skills - Locomotor/ Space Navigation
2. Movement and Dance
3. Fundamental Movement Skills - Agility/Balance/ Coordination
4. Fundamental Movement Skills - Gymnastics

5. Multi-Skills - Hand-Eye and Hand-Foot Coordination
6. Athletics

Each unit features six activity cards, divided into introduction, main, and closing activities. The cards incorporate imaginative play and storytelling to enhance engagement, while promoting creativity and curiosity. The cards also provide:

- Clear lesson objectives
- Physical development links to the EYFS curriculum
- Wider developmental links to the EYFS curriculum
- Key teaching points
- Equipment lists
- Key vocabulary

**Helen Battelley is an Early Years Physical Development Consultant, trainer and author.**

**To learn more about the PAAP, visit [www.musicandmovement.org.uk/paap](http://www.musicandmovement.org.uk/paap).**

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# Social Dance: The Lost Art of Scottish Social Dancing

**Lorna Valentine**, Chair of the RSCDS Scottish Schools Working Group

For hundreds of years, social dancing has been a fundamental part of Scottish life. From cosy bothies and cottar houses to majestic halls of castles and stately homes, Scots of all backgrounds came together to celebrate with dance. With fiddles, flutes, and oboes filling the air, communities moved in rhythm, connecting through their shared love of music and movement. Traditional dances like “Strip the Willow” and “Dashing White Sergeant” were staples of Scottish celebrations and continue to be a lasting expression of Scottish heritage.

Today, however, a surprising gap has emerged. Although Scottish dance is still cherished worldwide – in cities from Sydney to San Francisco and Tokyo to Paris – it’s losing ground where it should be thriving most: right at home, in Scotland. As it stands, Scottish dance is no longer a standard part of the curriculum in Scottish schools, and as a result, generations of young Scots are growing up without learning the steps that connect them to their cultural roots.

The Royal Scottish Country Dance Society (RSCDS) is determined to change this. They have designed Scottish dance resources specifically for primary and secondary schools, making them accessible for free through the Scottish education platform GLOW and the SATPE website. These resource packs are filled with everything educators need to run vibrant, energetic, and engaging classes. From lesson plans and instructions, to music and videos for all the dances – all available on smart phone or tablet. With RSCDS’s support, young Scots can leave school equipped with the skills to participate in social dances they may encounter at weddings, ceilidhs, and community gatherings.

## Why Dance Scottish?

Learning Scottish dance goes beyond just preserving tradition. It’s an experience rich with educational value that integrates seamlessly with Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence. Here’s a look at how Scottish dance connects with various educational domains:

1. **Expressive Arts:** Dance is a creative, expressive activity that allows children to engage actively in performances. It provides an outlet for self-expression and artistic creativity, building confidence and communication skills.
2. **Mathematics:** Counting bars of music and steps, recognizing patterns, and arranging in formations (like squares or circles) help develop mathematical skills in an enjoyable way.
3. **Science:** Dance fosters an understanding of body movement, energy, and balance, encouraging children to become more aware of their physical capabilities and limitations.
4. **Languages:** Through listening to and following dance instructions, students improve their comprehension and communication skills in a dynamic setting.
5. **Religious & Moral Education:** Dancing in sets promotes values like respect, self-discipline, and teamwork, encouraging children to care for and cooperate with each other.
6. **Health & Wellbeing:** Physical activity, like dancing, is essential for both mental and physical health. Additionally, the personal achievements they experience in mastering new dances can build self-esteem.
7. **Technologies:** The collaborative nature of dancing in teams helps children develop skills that are transferable to group work, enhancing their ability to work well with others.

8. **Social Studies:** Dancing provides opportunities for social interaction, encouraging consideration for others and a sense of belonging. Learning about traditional dances also helps students explore the rich history and culture of Scotland.

### Dance for Rewards

To motivate schools and students, RSCDS offers an accreditation program. Schools can earn a certificate, while students can receive medals, starting from bronze and progressing to silver and gold. Imagine a school where every student has the chance to achieve “gold” status, creating a community bound by shared cultural pride.

### Ideas to Keep Scottish Dance Alive

Consider these activities to bring Scottish dance to life in your school:

- **Organise a school or family ceilidh** – indoors or outdoors, bringing the entire school community together in a joyous celebration.
- **Attend a Day of Dance** – a special event with other schools, creating connections and memories.
- **Host a Transition Event** – for P7 pupils moving to secondary school, using dance as a fun way to bridge the gap.
- **Celebrate with a Burns Supper or St. Andrew’s Day event** – letting students honour Scotland’s heritage through dance and festivities.

To make things even easier, the Teachers’ Association of Scotland has released *Start Dancing!*, a free PDF resource available by emailing [Tas.secretary@mail.com](mailto:Tas.secretary@mail.com). This guide contains 24 new dances along with 8 popular ceilidh dances, designed especially for schools. Music is also available for download on Bandcamp, ensuring teachers have everything they need to start dancing!

For more details, visit the RSCDS website at [www.rscds.org](http://www.rscds.org) and click on the “Learn” tab to find resources for primary and secondary school teachers. Whether you’re a teacher looking to bring Scottish dance to your classroom or a parent eager to see your children connect with their heritage, RSCDS is here to help. Scottish social dancing is more than just a pastime – it’s a vibrant thread in the fabric of Scotland’s identity, one worth preserving for generations to come.

# Preparing Teachers for Developments in Inclusive Practice

Alison Shaw, Education & Learning Manager,  
Scottish Disability Sport



The Paris 2024 Paralympics may seem like a distant memory for some, but the lasting effects ensure that work continues to take place to enable young disabled people have access to high quality physical education, physical activity and sport across Scotland.

In September, SQA published new guidance outlining the steps schools and colleges can take to help make its National Physical Education qualifications more accessible to learners with physical disabilities. Working with Scottish Disability Sport, SQA updated the list of activities young people can be assessed in as part of their PE qualifications at National 3 through to Advanced Higher level.

From the 2025 school year onwards, learners with disabilities can have their performance assessed in Paralympic sports such as Boccia (for those with severe physical impairments only) and Goalball (for those with severe vision impairments only), and other wheelchair, powerchair, and parasports activities, which can then contribute towards their final grade.

SQA worked with Scottish Disability Sport to produce the updated guidance after it received feedback from teachers across the country asking for more to be done to enable disabled learners to study National Qualifications in PE. The update is part of SQA's ongoing maintenance of its courses, and the views of teachers and learners are an important part of the review process.

Additional developments have included clarifications in reasonable adjustment policies and motorised equipment statements, more explicit messaging regarding inclusion and para sport within course

specification documents and a new process for teachers to source bespoke support for making adjustments to assessment conditions for their pupils. Concurrent with these developments, Scottish Disability Sport launched its new Inclusive PE practical module, offering the opportunity for teachers to be upskilled in preparation for an anticipated rise in disabled pupils wishing to access PE at qualification level.

The two-hour workshop provides an opportunity for teachers to learn about and test adaptations to the most popular sports in their local authority area, to discuss and overcome identified challenges with the support of experienced and qualified Scottish Disability Sport tutors, and to direct teachers to ongoing support as the developments in PE for disabled pupils take shape. Thanks to funding from Motability, 12 workshops to date have been held across local authorities at no cost.

At this year's SATPE Conference, teachers were able to take advantage of an abridged version of the workshop, ran by former PE teacher, Anne Marie Fleming, and current Para Athlete, Laura Pilkington. Immediate feedback was that those who attended benefitted hugely but wanted more!

Thankfully, the support doesn't stop at the end of a workshop. All teachers who attend Inclusive PE Disability Inclusion Training are added to a Community of Practice on the virtual learning platform, Brightspace, which provides further resources including sport-specific Top Tips cards, equipment lists and more in-depth information about how to include those with specific impairments.

Layla McCloskey, a pupil from Barrhead High School, who is undertaking Boccia as part of her National 5 Physical Education course said: 'I'm so pleased that I'm able to take part in PE this year. I've been playing Boccia for a while now, and it's great that I can do it as part of my qualification. I'm looking forward to having my performance assessed and showing what I can do.'

Alison Shaw, Education and Learning Manager at Scottish Disability Sport, added:

*'This is a real, tangible step in giving young people with physical disabilities the chance to continue their sporting journey into their senior years at school and*

*beyond. By giving schools and teachers guidance on how they can support their learners with disabilities, we can foster lifelong connections with sport and physical activity, and we may even develop future Paralympians along the way.'*

The updated guidance, and more information on our National Qualifications in PE, can be found here > <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45741.html>



Boccia Player, Layla, smiles as she prepares her blue ball for delivery at a school boccia session SQA Boccia. Photo Credit: Peter Devlin



Heartstart was developed following an international symposium in 1990, when major organisations with an interest in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training reviewed the methods used to teach in schools and communities. As a result the Heartstart programme was formed. Heartstart officially started in 1997 and has trained over 300,000 people to date.

Heartstart projects in Argyll and Clyde come under the umbrella of Save a Life for Scotland (SALFS) and is funded by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnerships therefore, training offered in schools or the community is **free of charge**.

Heartstart is a simple programme to teach people what 'to do' in a life-threatening emergency. It is about the first person on the scene.

The Heartstart programme covers the unconscious casualty, recognition of a suspected heart attack, cardiac arrest and awareness of an AED, choking adults, children and babies and dealing with a serious bleed. The course takes approximately two hours to complete but can be adapted to suit whatever time is available.

Staff can attend a four hour instructor course to deliver the training, the four hours can be split into two x two-hour sessions. There is plenty of equipment and teaching resources available for schools to use.

There is also the option of a 'buddie' programme in which senior pupils can train as instructors and they can then help staff train their peers and also visit their feeder primary schools and help deliver the training to primary sevens. To become a 'buddie' instructor also takes four hours.

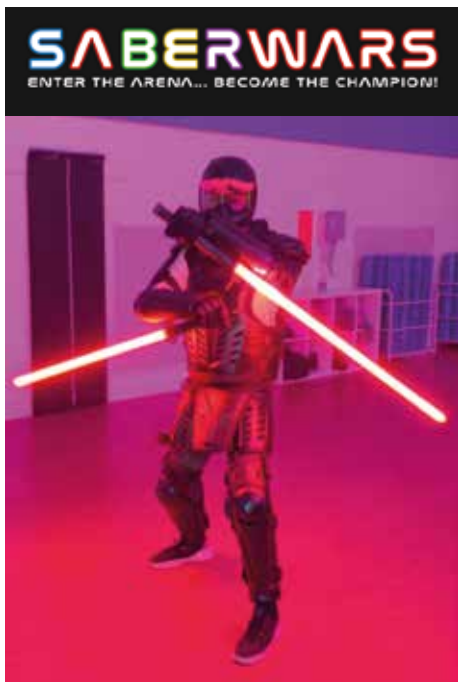
Heartstart is overseen by a lead nurse who trains staff, 'buddies' and volunteers to become instructors. There are around 140 volunteers in the Argyll and Clyde area who can visit schools to deliver the training or support staff if needed in the delivery. All volunteers have been vetted to NHS standards and must have a Heartstart Instructor PVG.

If your school is interested in being part of Heartstart, or would like Heartstart visit your school, please contact [ggc.heartstart.resuscitation@nhs.scot](mailto:ggc.heartstart.resuscitation@nhs.scot)



# A New Era of Movement, Confidence and Class Unity in UK Schools

Scott Taylor, Saberwars



In today's classrooms, many young people feel disconnected from traditional sport. Screen time is rising, physical confidence is falling, and for too many pupils, PE still feels like something "for the sporty ones." As someone who grew up loving combat sports but often felt like the odd one out in mainstream PE, I wanted to change that.

Saberwars Training is a PE-ready programme designed to get pupils moving, thinking, and growing through a completely fresh format. Built around lightsaber-style training tools, structured martial movement, and

partner-based drills, this system is about more than novelty. It is about offering a pathway into physical activity that builds confidence, improves agility, and creates unity in the classroom.

## A Martial Art Disguised as an Activity Pupils Want to Try

Saberwars Training is a non-contact programme that uses LED sabers and structured strike sequences to teach footwork, balance, reaction timing, and spatial awareness. The sabers are a hook, but what we are really delivering is movement training rooted in martial arts principles.

The skills pupils develop through regular sessions include:

- Hand-eye coordination
- Reaction speed
- Core stability and posture
- Lower body strength through dynamic stance work
- Flexibility and balance through controlled flow drills

Everything is taught progressively, allowing pupils of all ability levels to participate and improve. By embedding martial discipline into a visually engaging activity, we create the conditions for lasting physical growth.

## Turning Gamers into Movers through Structured Progression.

One of the main motivations behind this programme was to engage students who typically prefer games and screens to sport and sweat. Rather than fight that instinct, we've taken cues from gaming itself.

In Saberwars, pupils progress through levels. They earn belts. They complete challenges. They see visible

improvement each week. This mirrors the reward system they're used to in games, but the progress is physical and real.

That structure gives students:

- Clear goals and motivation
- A sense of achievement through mastery
- Engagement with movement in a format that feels natural to them

For many, it's the first time they connect positively with physical effort.

### **Confidence, Communication and Class Unity**

Saberwars is taught in pairs or small groups, which encourages peer learning, communication, and trust. It is inherently inclusive, because the non-contact format removes much of the fear or pressure associated with traditional sport.

Through regular practice, pupils begin to:

- Lead and support partners
- Take ownership of learning sequences
- Develop confidence through physical competence
- Respect shared rules and structure

I've witnessed pupils who rarely speak in class step up and guide their peers through drills. I've seen quieter children transform into confident leaders within just a few sessions. The sense of shared challenge and achievement brings classes together in a powerful way.

### **Engaging Mind and Body Simultaneously**

What makes Saberwars different is the way it combines physical training with mental engagement. Pupils are not just moving. They are learning combinations, responding to cues, adjusting footwork, and maintaining timing with a partner.

This enhances:

- Cognitive flexibility
- Short-term memory and recall
- Visual tracking and focus
- Overall discipline and concentration

It's especially effective for pupils who benefit from kinaesthetic learning or need additional support focusing in traditional environments. The learning is active, immersive, and layered with meaning.

### **Fully Supported for Schools of All Sizes**

Saberwars Training has been developed with school delivery in mind. It is:

- Non-contact and low risk
- Simple to run with full lesson plans
- Flexible for all ability levels
- Equipment-light and easy to store
- Suitable for PE, after-school clubs, or reward-based enrichment

Everything is designed to make implementation as easy as possible, even for schools with limited space or PE staffing.

### **Instructor Support and High-Quality Video Lessons**

To ensure consistency across schools, we have partnered with Vince, a Wushu martial arts instructor and expert in cinematic lightsaber combat. Vince has created a full video curriculum, covering the seven core forms of Saberwars Training, with clear demonstrations, movement breakdowns, and safety cues.

His teaching helps staff deliver sessions confidently and gives pupils a strong visual model for progression. Certificates and grading criteria are included, so schools can celebrate achievement as pupils move through the system.

## Complete Licensing Packages with Optional Equipment Bundles

We are launching tiered licensing packages for 2025 to help schools access everything in one place. Each licence includes:

- Full video training library
- Written curriculum and lesson plans
- Printable certificates and visual guides
- Instructor support materials and setup guidance
- Optional PE instructor accreditation
- Downloadable posters and pupil progress tracking tools

Schools can also order our official Saberwars Equipment Packs, which include:

- LED training sabers
- Protective visors
- Storage bags and accessories

Whether you are looking for a simple club starter pack or a full curriculum rollout, we provide a turnkey system ready to launch.

## Why I Built This

My mission with Saberwars is to build a new generation of confident, physically capable young people. I want to provide an experience where every pupil feels they belong, can progress, and has something to contribute. Sport should not be exclusive. Movement should be for everyone.

Saberwars isn't just about learning to duel. It's about learning to move with precision, to build control, to focus under pressure, and to feel part of something. This training builds more than skills. It builds belief.

## Our Vision for the Future

This is just the beginning. We are actively developing:

- Intra-school events and inter-school leagues
- Online stat tracking and player profiles
- Instructor CPD and certification frameworks
- A national grading and ranking system for schools

The long-term goal is to bring students together across the UK in a shared movement culture that values effort, focus and fun. We want to help pupils become physically literate, mentally resilient, and socially connected.

## Now Welcoming Schools for 2025 Pilot Launch

We are now opening discussions with UK schools to pilot Saberwars Training in 2025. Early access packages include:

- Priority access to the full platform
- Discounted kits and resources
- Early invitation to showcase events

If your school is looking to try something different, something structured, and something that helps pupils grow, we would love to hear from you.

**Visit:** [www.saberwars.co.uk](http://www.saberwars.co.uk)

**Email:** [bookings@saberwars.co.uk](mailto:bookings@saberwars.co.uk)

Based in Scotland, expanding across the UK  
Let pupils train like Jedi, move like martial artists, and grow as confident, capable young people.

# NQPE: An Opportunity for Change

Brodie Runciman, Lecturer, University of Edinburgh

It is an exciting time for the Physical Education profession, with a rapid increase in the popularity of informal physical activity participation globally (O'Connor and Penney, 2021) and the remarkable rise in the number of students taking National Qualifications Physical Education (NQPE) in Scotland (Hepburn, 2023). These encouraging trends, combined with the Scottish Governments recent commitment to rebalance assessment methods across all national courses (reduce high stakes exams and increase continuous internal assessments) presents prime opportunities for the future of NQPE.

Before looking at these possible future prospects, in taking a somewhat provocative stance, I encourage readers to consider how meaningful the current NQPE courses are for the lives of young people in Scotland. As a previous teacher of NQPE, and now an Initial Teacher Educator at Moray House, I hope to shed light on some of the issues with the current format of these courses. So not to dwell on the challenging areas, in the next edition of the SATPE journal, I will outline some future possibilities which could help to amplify the positive trends highlighted above.

## NQPE Aims and Purpose

If asking PE teachers in Scotland what the aim of their subject is, few would argue with Penney (2020) that it is to encourage all learners to be lifelong participants of physical activity and sport. Or, in a similar vein, with Siedentop (1994), that the subject should be devoted to enhancing the prospect of pupils valuing physical activity so that they organise their time for participation in regular movement throughout their life. These sentiments are reflected in Scottish government aspirations for the Broad General Education (BGE) phase: PE should lay sound foundations for “fulfilling an active and healthy

lifestyle” (Scottish Government, 2010, P5). It therefore seems fair to ask the question of how well does Senior Phase NQPE align with this goal?

Taking Higher PE as an example, the course specification starts promisingly, with a statement that it reflects CfE values, purposes and principles, where the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired will be transferable to life. In keeping with the ambitions highlighted for the subject in the BGE phase, the Higher PE course will “promote an awareness of mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing” (SQA, 2024, p.4). One would therefore expect the lifelong aims highlighted within CfE to be exhibited throughout the remaining course specification. However, the focus diverges when it comes to the five Higher course aims, with four centring on performance (no mention of the lifelong aspirations set out in the BGE). The contradiction continues when outlining who the course is for: those who have an interest in developing complex movement and performance skills. Surprisingly, physical activity participation does not feature in the remaining 45-page course specification document. This finding is reflected in the conclusions of the OECD (2021) report; Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) in the junior phase and its qualification system in the senior phase are misaligned.

The dominant aim of improving sports performance in the Higher course not only misaligns with the BGE curriculum but also with the way in which most children will likely participate in physical activity in their future lives. While only some students on a NQPE course will go on to reach elite levels of sports performance, all could be lifelong participants in physical activity. In the UK there is a continuing trend, particularly among young people, away from formal, structured, team club-based sports (due to fees, fixed scheduling and a focus on competition,

Wheaton, 2010). On the other hand, there has been unprecedented growth in popularity of non-mainstream physical activities (e.g., cycling, running, gym, rock climbing, open water swimming), said to be a response to societal demands for increased freedom, social connection, challenge, and greater autonomy, while also being more convenient to organise (O'Connor and Penney, 2021). It has been argued this emerging trend in activity participation, often labelled 'lifestyle pursuits' (Harris et al. 2017) or 'informal participation' (O'Connor and Penney, 2021), is because activities do not require high levels of skill competence for entry i.e., where the "the power of will overrules the power of skill" (Safvenbom et al., 2018, pg.2002). Hence, the continued sole focus for NQPE on improving skills for sports performance seems to be increasingly at odds with what comes both before and after study on the course.

If the aim of PE is to encourage all children to develop and value the habits for maintaining an active and healthy life both during and after schoollyears, then some degree of movement competence is clearly important. I am not implying that NQPE should not give any attention to sport performance development. Similarly, to Penney (2020), my argument is that we should consider how much attention it is given, comparative to the skills, knowledge and understanding required to promote the value of lifelong PE. If NQPE truly wants to reflect CfE values, where the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired will be transferable to life, then one would have thought, for example, the ability to identify and evaluate opportunities for physical activity in the local community would be of importance. Looking internationally, Whittle (2017), in their international review of 15 certificated senior secondary PE courses, single out Scotland as an outlier, being 'distinctly different'

from other countries, who all include a premise for the sociocultural factors affecting physical activity participation.

### **Bluntness of Assessment**

It could be argued that adding three additional factors to NQPE courses back in 2014 (social, mental and emotional) was a step forward in meeting the holistic and lifelong aspirations of the subject. Ethics, fair play, social responsibility, citizenship, and barriers to participation all featured in the SQA's new four factors table (SQA, 2013). However, these areas of knowledge, more in-keeping with the lifelong aims of CfE, were then clumsily linked to how they 'impact performance'. There is a sense of irony in the task NQPE teachers have been given: promote PE's benefits to mental, social and emotional wellbeing (of which there are many), but then link these to testing, gathering data, and personal development plans. For many young people, a focus on performance development is a barrier to participation (in contrast, take Parkrun for example, where a focus on consistent participation, rather than competition, has resulted in a surge in popularity). Resultantly, I tend to agree with the reflections of Thorburn (2019), that it was self-inflicted and confused thinking to use knowledge in this rigid and siloed way.

This issue of what and how learning is assessed in PE is reflected in Hayward's wider commentary on National Qualifications, where it was said that the discourse of exam alignment had placed a disproportionate emphasis on preparing students for assessment (Scottish Government, 2023). Because of the accountability for high marks (where student performance is viewed as a measure of teacher performance), the content of NQPE courses has been narrowed to focus only on what will come up in the

exam. If barriers to participation, ethics and social responsibility are not assessed, they will not be taught. This narrowing of the curriculum has resulted in a detriment to the learning experience for young people, something Hayward described as “repetitive and formulaic” and ultimately an unsatisfactory position to be in (Scottish Government, 2023, p.24). In some cases, this washback effect of the assessment, where only what is assessed is what is taught, has trickled all the way down to the Broad General Education.

Another important aspect that has an impact on how NQPE is taught is the high number of students who elect to take the course (third most popular Higher in 2024) and the consequent need for consistency and integrity in marking across schools. To support this process, SQA developed highly specific marking and assessment processes. Resultantly, the use of rote learning and extensive exam rehearsal are frequently seen as the best interventions to prepare learners for the formulaic responses which are rewarded in the exam. This “bluntness” of written assessment instrument (Thorburn, 2019, p.10) has the unintended consequence of a rigidly prescribed experience for those studying NQPE courses, where they must walk the tightrope of command words and acronyms. Students face a careful balancing act to get marks - evidencing their own personal and unique physical activity experiences risks straying too far from the tightly bound marking criteria. The drilling of command words and rote responses, where pupils rehearse and try to remember abstract and disassociated concepts, is likely one of little relevance to real life beyond the confines of NQPE. These experiences are a far cry from the “meaningful contexts” encouraged in the course specification (SQA, 2024, p.18).

## Conclusion

In describing PE’s competing aims three decades ago, Pate and Hohn (1994) coined the term ‘muddled mission’, and it could be said that this is still true for NQPE in Scotland today. Given the apparent success of the subject, some might say it would be risky to do anything more than defend the status quo (this is perhaps evident by the Government’s curious decision not to classify PE as a practical subject under its reform). The current courses, dominated by what Kirk calls ‘sport-technique-based’ PE, have been incredibly resistant to change, despite being “culturally obsolete” (Kirk, 2012, p.4). While I think there is still a case for developing sport skills, I also acknowledge a strong argument for diversifying the focus of NQPE courses to better connect with the lives of young people. Widening the purpose beyond the ‘impact on performance’ and easing the shackles of the four factors would be a good starting point in freeing NQPE teacher’s pedagogy and the resultant experience for learners.

Hayward’s review and recommendation to rebalance NQ assessment methods underscores the need to evaluate current assessment arrangements, providing a window of time for change. It is therefore important for the dedicated NQPE teachers of today to critically reflect on courses and consider how things could be done differently in the future.

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# Does having an open dialogue and positive relationship with parents improve pupils' participation and attainment within physical education?

Bex Moodie, Whitehill Secondary School  
@CurrieMoodiePE

Enhancing academic and physical achievement is an important part of our teaching ethos (Wang and Sheikh-Khalil, 2013). Work by Appleton et al. (2006), O'Connor et al. (2009), Gorard and See (2013), and Goodall and Montgomery (2014) also emphasise the increase in attainment and participation rates within physical education with active parental engagement. Building on these results, a practitioner's inquiry was undertaken in 2023 to encourage parental engagement and to raise attainment. Following on from the success of this intervention, in 2024 the practice was repeated.

Last year during my probation year we were tasked with producing a practitioner's inquiry. I decided to focus on one of the drivers from the National Improvement Framework: parental involvement and engagement. To that end I decided to create a behaviour and attainment intervention (see appendix 1). This intervention was a huge success at my previous school, Hillhead, so I decided that I would repeat it this year at Whitehill.

I had already identified a very challenging S3 National class. With 30 in the class, only 7 of them were on track to attain their National 4 before the intervention. Reasons for this low attainment were lack of participation, refusal to do written work while in the classroom, and severe behavioural challenges. Using robust tracking and monitoring and discussions with the PT and also the DHT for that year group, those pupils identified were placed into the intervention. The parents and carers of the pupils were spoken to at the S3 parents evening or over the phone. Having buy-in from the parents was crucial to its success.

All stakeholders involved in the physical education of these pupils were briefed and asked to report on each pupil via a Word document on OneDrive. This included the Principal Teacher of Physical Education,

myself, one other PE teacher, and also the head of the Whitehill Football Academy. The report itself was per period of contact time and included a brief write up of the session and then a scoring out of 5 for behaviour and participation. Throughout the week I would check in with the stakeholders and make sure everything was going well. On a Friday I would then collate all the information gathered and put this into an email that I could send to the designated parent or carer.

Over the course of the 6 weeks, I was able to track the progress of pupils and determine whether the intervention was working or if we had to do any more work with those pupils. I found that by emailing the report on the Friday it offered parents and carers the opportunity to discuss the content with the pupil. We found in the department that on the Monday when pupils were back in the school, they wanted to discuss the report with us, asking why we had sent what we had sent to their parents and carers. It created a fantastic dialogue between us and more open and honest relationships were developed. It also helped increase the overall attainment of that class. This was also felt across the school with other subject teachers commenting on improved behaviour within their classes. With pupils now aware that honest and detailed reports were being sent home every week, they engaged much more with both the practical and written side of their National 4.

To that end after the last round of tracking I have found that we have increased our attainment from 7 out of 30 to 27 out of 30 pupils achieving their National 4. This has been a hugely successful intervention this year and something I know many staff are interested in developing for their own subjects.

## Appendix 1 - Example of S3 Intervention Report

Name	Mon P2 - SC	Weds P2 - FA	Thurs P1 – BCM/ FA	Thurs P3 - FA	Fri P1 - FA	Fri P4 - SC
Pupil A	Another good period today from Pupil A.  Behaviour 5/5  Effort 5/5	Pupil A worked well. No behavioural issues. Effort levels were really high.  Behaviour 5/5  Effort 5/5	Pupil A worked well today. Even though he isn't well at the moment he still took part and was really polite.  Behaviour 5/5  Effort 5/5	I was in the meeting and didn't see him  Behaviour /5  Effort /5	Spot on, not a problem  Behaviour 5/5  Effort 5/5	Another great lesson today. The improvement in Pupil A 's behaviour and effort has been great.  Behaviour 5/5  Effort 5/5
Name	Mon P2 – SC	Weds P2 – FA	Thurs P1 – FA/ BCM	Thurs P3 – FA	Fri P1 – FA	Fri P4 – SC
Pupil B	Very disappointed with Pupil B today. He was arguing with me and being disrespectful. He needs to learn that not every decision he will agree with.  Behaviour 2/5  Effort 5/5	Another good lesson today. There has been a huge improvement in Pupil D's behaviour and effort over the 6 weeks.  Behaviour 5/5  Effort 5/5	Worked well today. Pupil B continues to improve his behaviour. He was very respectful today.  Behaviour 5/5  Effort 5/5	I was in a meeting  Behaviour /5  Effort /5	All good, well behaved and made the session enjoyable in his own way.  Behaviour 5/5  Effort 5/5	Much better lesson today from Pupil B  Behaviour 5/5  Effort 5/5

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# AGENCY & FEMALE DISENGAGEMENT: INVESTIGATING EMPOWERING & CONTROLLING INFLUENCES THROUGHOUT TEACHERS' PRACTICE

Rachael Downs,

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## Rationale:

The promotion of lifelong engagement in Physical Activity (PA) has remained a sought-after by-product of both primary and secondary school Physical Education (PE) for decades (Aggerholm, Standal and Larsson, 2017; Sallis and McKenzie, 1991).

It has been long established that teachers' abilities to adapt into agents of change are influenced by wide-ranging factors (Buchanan, 2015; Thorburn and Horrell, 2011), as schools are recognised as complex and multidimensional contexts for teaching and learning (Ball, Maguire, and Braun, 2012; Jess, Carse & Keay, 2014).

Reports recognise the decline of female participation and engagement within PE (Casey et al., 2009; Green, 2008; Kirk, 2005). Research conducted by Scottish Health Survey 2022 investigated 4,394 adults (aged 16 and over) and 1,764 children. Consistent with previous years, a higher proportion of men (70%) reported meeting recommended physical activity levels than women (60%), affirming the judgement that females are disengaged in physical activity.

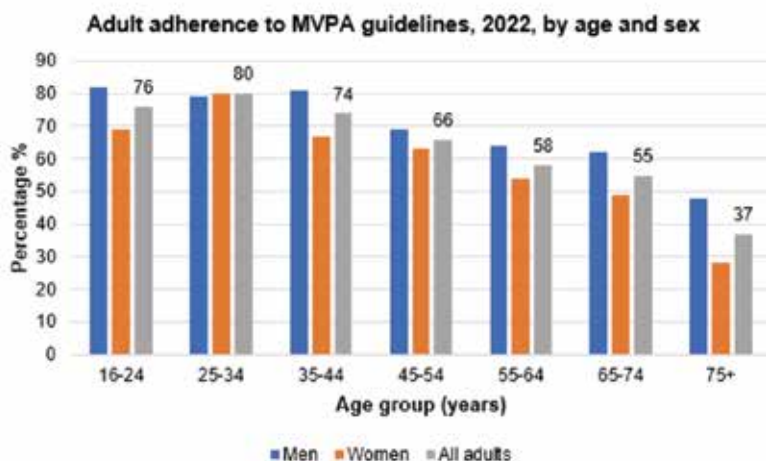


Figure one: Key findings from the [Scottish Health Survey 2022](#).

## Review of Literature

An abundance of literature has been dedicated to researching why females disengage from PE and wider PA, with key findings associating the disengagement with wide-ranging factors, some including: being 'unable' themselves (Mitchell et al., 2015); body consciousness (Enright & O'sullivan, 2010; Gray et al, 2015); schools' inability to employ same-sex PE classes (Mitchell, Gray and Inchley, 2013).

Contemporary research from Dove that has driven its #KeepHerConfident campaign has found that female students disengage from physical education due to low body confidence, with studies showing that nearly half of teenage girls drop out of sports compared to males. This is a key focus of Dove's "Body Confident Sport" campaign aimed at supporting girls in staying active and participating in sports.

***So, how can teachers bring about change and increase the engagement of female students in PE?***

A teacher's ability to "critically shape" responses to thought-provoking situations can be regarded as their 'agency' (Biesta & Teddler, 2006):

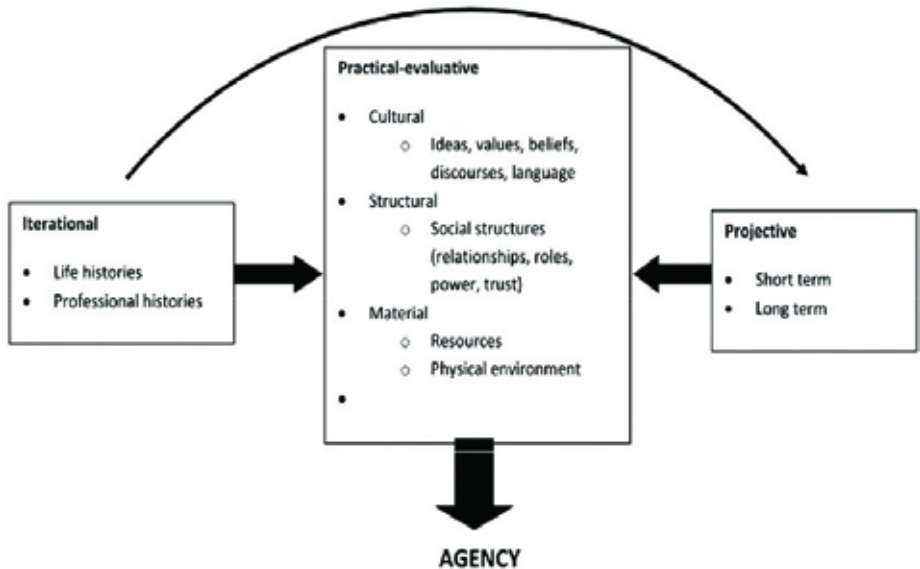


Figure two: Ecological Model of Teacher Agency  
(Priestley et al., 2015)

As all three dimensions significantly contribute to the existence of teacher agency, it has been long established that a teachers' ability to develop into an agent of change and exercise professional agency is controlled by extensive influencers (Buchanan, 2015; MacLean et al., 2015; Marquina & Jones, 2015).

**Research Questions**

To investigate the controlling and empowering influences teachers' face when challenging female disengagement within PE in Scottish schools and consider:

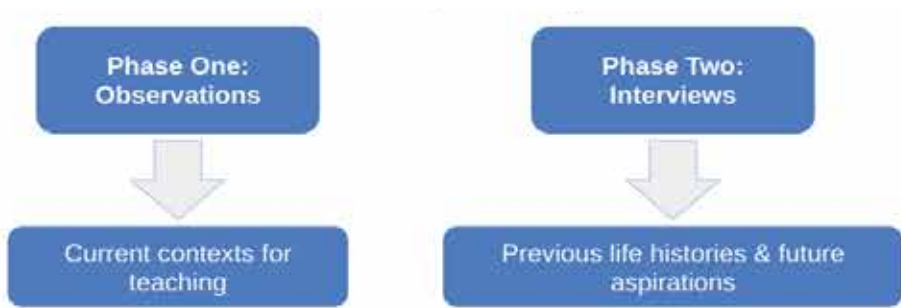
1. Do the life and teaching histories of teachers shape their practice?
2. To what extent do variable contexts of teaching enable or constrain teachers?

3. Are teacher aspirations influencers to their practice?

**Research Design**

Two teachers - one male & one female - were observed over a nine week period within a non denominational Scottish public secondary school:

- Thirty-six lessons - certificated and uncertificated - were observed
- Two semi-structured interviews concluded data collection
- PE classes were mixed-gender
- Classes observed were of similar age and stage of development
- Each phase of data collection aimed to meet a different 'dimension' of agency [figure 2]



#### Observation 12 Conclusions:

- Again, the class teacher has sought support from a member of his department, who has again illustrated their support by working with students X, Y and Z.
- This one-to-one support has positively impacted on the pupils' performances, as they are now all playing alongside male members, not displaying signs of disengagement. If their behaviours from this week were compared to initial observations, there would be a massive difference.
- Again, the class teacher maintains the praise and motivation exerted in previous lessons.
- He has also again shown how keen he is to continually push and progress his students through offering lunch time lessons and his support in extra-curricular activities.
- The above support systems greatly depend on the structures of the school; the availability of the gym hall during lunch times and scheduled extra-curricular activities.

Figure three: observation sample

*"[with swimming] I feel like I approach things quite casually. I try to not make a big deal about it – I prefer to be that way. Also, I try get everyone into the water as quickly as possible – I'm not a fan of people sitting at the side watching; I know I wouldn't like being watched and in the past I've found students can feel really anxious, which isn't fair. What else... oh, we obviously allow the girls – and boys too – to wear t-shirts over their suits if they wish. I think, that generally just makes them feel more comfortable – its all in their heads though, haha! I think we spoke about this previously, but me and Mr \*\*\*\*\* managed to purchase the girls swimming caps to keep their hair dry at the start of the year. That really*

*encouraged the girls, and if you look, you'll notice that most of them still wear these caps today."*

Figure four: interview sample

### Data Analysis

The researcher adopted a deductive approach to analyse the gathered data, and utilised the Ecological Model of Teacher Agency (Priestley et al., 2015) as an integrated framework to generate sub-themes for each dimension.

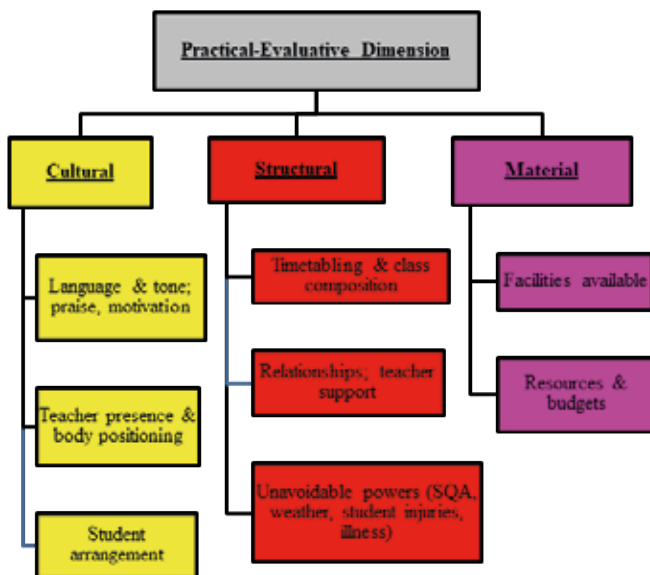


Figure five: observation sub-themes

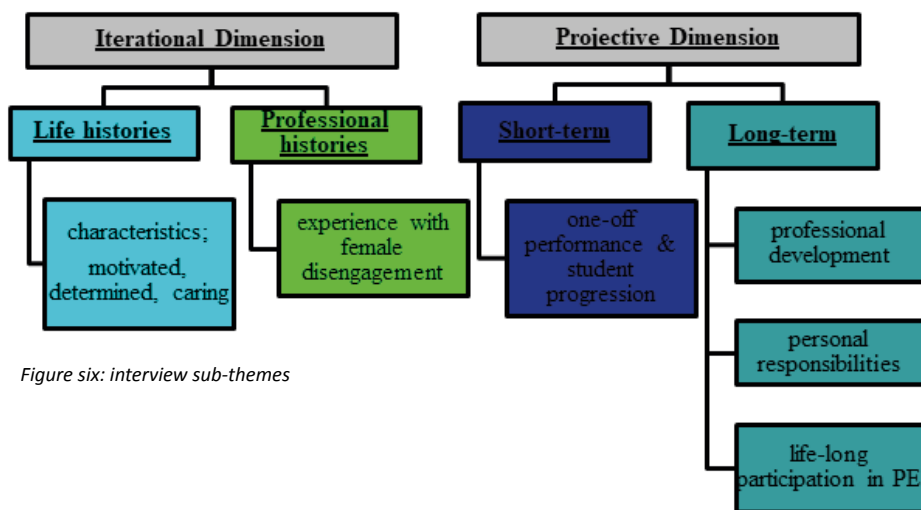


Figure six: interview sub-themes

Overview of Empowering & Controlling Influences	
Empowering Influences	Controlling Influences
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Entrenched self-motivation &amp; self-efficacy "[being PE teachers' it is] a main responsibility. A goal for me is to ensure the engagement and inclusivity of all my kids."</li> <li>2. Departmental support Evidence of team teaching, faculty goal of enhancing engagement &amp; attainment</li> <li>3. Facilities, resource &amp; budgets Purchased pink swimming caps and additional equipment Effective use of ICT in learning</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Departmental timetable, structures &amp; systems "...when prelims approaches our games hall is the first to go..." Same-sex classes, personalisation &amp; choice</li> <li>2. Curriculum demands "things like student assessments, portfolio work, one-off performance grades... It's just unavoidable stuff"</li> <li>3. Wider influences outwith control Student absences &amp; illness Weather</li> </ol>

## **Discussion**

### **Empowering Influence - Departmental Support**

Teacher collaboration within the PE department empowered the participant to employ their strategies to enhance female disengagement as they collectively agreed on departmental goals and strategic plans to achieve set goals, affirming MacLean et al's (2015) view that When bringing around change, it "requires not only personal agency, but structural support" (p.10). Moreover, MacLean et al's (2015) belief that "agency is enhanced by collaboration" was supported by these examples in the small-scale study:

- Observation two revealed that changing the National 5 swimming schedule (influenced by the PTC and department) increased female student participation, as it avoided concerns about having wet hair for the rest of the school day
- The female PE colleague's schedule allowed her to support the National class, and this was given voluntary
- Female student engagement remains high when their preferred activities

The shared departmental goals empower teachers to exercise agency, highlighted in observation eleven and twelve when a female colleague assisted the National 5 female students in basketball. The participatory teacher acknowledged the support, describing the department as cohesive and helpful.

When bringing around change, MacLean et al (2015) highlighted that collaborative work bound by shared goals and collective strengths, between both colleagues and senior management has been acknowledged as a prominent enabling influence for teacher agency (Biesta, Priestly and Robinson, 2015; MacLean, 2016). In fact, Archer (2000) believes that agency can only be achieved collectively, as significant powers falling within the practical-evaluative dimension of schools cannot be overcome independently.

### **Empowering Influence - Facilities & Resources**

In addition, the researcher found a strong correlation between contemporary facilities, materials and available PE budgets empowered participatory teachers in employing strategies to enhance female engagement in PE. Specifically, effective use of new iPads within a Sport Education model enhanced engagement in lessons; whilst not always enhancing physical literacy or involvement of female participants, it successfully allowed the female students to be engaged in the learning process.

Research conducted by Goodyear, Ashley and Kirk (2014) also found that females participated in lessons when they could 'hide behind the camera' and suggest that if we want females to engage in PE, a temporary solution is to celebrate their engagement in learning in PE, even if it is not physical activity. If we do this, we may be able to positively influence their likelihood of engaging in physical activity in the future.

### **Empowering Influences - Conclusions**

1. Collaboration and support significantly influenced the participant's ability to enhance experiences for female students, aligning with findings from Archer (2000) and MacLean (2016)
2. Teachers' ability to exercise agency relies on extensive and diverse factors (Buchannan, 2015; MacLean et al., 2015; Marquina & Jones, 2015)

### **Controlling Influence - Curriculum Demands**

This study found that the participants faced hierarchical demand, sacrificing practical PE lessons to ensure students completed essential portfolio work due to stringent national structure requirements. The participant highlighted that teaching certified classes is more demanding than core PE, with unavoidable tasks like student assessments and portfolio deadlines, which limited his time to work with his disengaged students.

This finding echoes Kirk's (1990a) statement that school environments are complex systems, with cooperative and interlinking influences.

Similarly, the study found that scheduled whole-school celebrations and prelims further restricted the participant's ability to implement strategies aimed at enhancing female experiences in PE: "...when prelims approach our games hall is the first to go..."

These challenges sparked reflection in one of the participants as they reflected that she actively addressed the complexities of their educational contexts by engaging in professional development and collaborating with colleagues to foster a supportive environment. Once again, highlighting the importance of MacLean et al's (2015) judgment that agency is a product of cultural and departmental support.

### **Conclusions and what can be taken from this small-scale study**

Drawing on the work of Quennerstedt, Landi and Casey (2024) investigating if 'busy, happy and good' still equals success in PE in today's generation of students, schools remain complex teaching systems that our teaching needs to address when tackling challenges such as female disengagement in PE. Quennerstedt, Landi and Casey (2024) revitalize this idea of students being 'busy, happy and good' and suggest that there are many components to successful PE experiences for students, reinforcing that female disengagement remains a challenging and complex issue, and another level of complexity is added when every teacher's differing contexts for teaching and learning are taken into consideration.

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# Student Articles: Peter Bilsborough Award

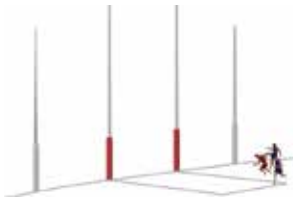


# Aussie Rules Football

Benjamin Gilhooley, University of Stirling



Aussie Rules Football was first established in 1859, created in part by Scottish immigrants. Fast-forward to today, as well as being the highest attended and viewed sport in Australia, it is also one of the highest attended domestic sports in the world and attracted a crowd of over 100,000 for the Grand Final this September. Aussie rules is a highly skilled and physical sport. 18 players, 10 umpires and 4 quarters of fast plays, hard tackles and precision kicking played on a cricket sized field. The aim of the game is to score points by kicking this rugby like ball through the middle sticks for 6 points or the outside sticks for 1 point. Players are allowed to tackle the opposition between the shoulders and can pass the ball either with a kick or a handball. This sport combines aspects of Basketball, Rugby and Gaelic Football.



There are many reasons to look to Australia for inspiration regarding sport and physical activity. The Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) works towards its target to make Australia the most active and healthy nation through its Sport 2030 vision, gaining substantial funding from the government to achieve this. The AIS also produce lots of positive resources available for free on the AIS website that are related to your standard sports and sports such as Aussie rules which can be beneficial for teachers.



In looking to include Aussie rules in a Scottish PE program as a non-traditional activity, one way might be to break up repetitive PE blocks. This could be used in the final few lessons of rugby. Consequently, an Aussie rules class could look to assess pupils on transferable skills, and how these may be adapted for different sports. Similarly, this may have a positive effect on participation. Research on alternative sports has shown that pupils trying a new or diverse sport are all on similar levels of ability to start which can have a positive impact on performance. This may limit some negative aspects of PE such as comparisons and ego motivation and might shift the focus on more performance-based motivation. With the sport's slightly complicated nature as a non-traditional activity, one way to possibly teach this is through Teaching Games for Understanding. This would give pupils more of a hands-on approach to learning through originally making mistakes in the game before refining skills and learning the rules and tactics of the sport. A final opportunity to include this in schools might be during culture week. Taking this opportunity to touch on other countries' sports and their cultural background.

In linking to the curriculum, some concepts that Aussie rules might fall under, would include multi-processing, gross and fine motor skills, speed and communication. Furthermore, it would promote capacities in successful learners, learning a new sport and effective contributors in this team game. In sum, looking beyond our shores for inspiration in Scottish PE could go a long way not only in keeping our subject fresh and new but could also bring with it cultural opportunities in learning about the world we live in.

# Critically Exploring the Impact of Physical Education on the Lives of Scottish Adolescent Boys Living in Poverty

Brodie Mackay, University of Edinburgh

This review explores the impact of Physical Education (PE) on Scottish adolescent boys living in poverty, focusing on three key themes: poverty in education, disadvantaged boys in PE, and whole-class consequences. Socioeconomic disparities remain a central issue in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2024a), with students from poorer backgrounds often two years behind their peers by adolescence (McCluskey, 2017). While interventions have aimed to address the attainment gap (Sosu & Ellis, 2014), the problem persists (Audit Scotland, 2021). Notably, although boys in poverty are often more disengaged from school (Jensen, 2013a; Fullarton, 2002), PE remains a subject many are drawn to (SQA, 2024a).

Poverty itself is difficult to define (Saunders, 2004; Spicker, 2007), with authors offering varying perspectives (Nyasulu, 2010). In Scotland, poverty is defined relatively (Scottish Government, 2019), yet absolute poverty still exists (JRF, 2024). One in four children live in poverty, surpassing government targets (Scottish Government, 2024b), worsened by the cost-of-living crisis (Office for Budget Responsibility, 2022) and Covid-19 (Audit Scotland, 2021).

Schools and teachers play a pivotal role in mitigating poverty's effects (Ellis & Sosu, 2015; McKinney et al, 2023), with pedagogical strategies like pupil voice proving beneficial (Graham et al, 2023). However, literature exploring the personal views of students living in poverty remains limited (Williams et al, 2017; Humbert et al, 2006). Naven et al (2019) found that transport costs, stigma, and expensive trips are key barriers, though recent Scottish Government policies like free bus travel aim to address some of these issues.

School disengagement is more common among adolescents, especially boys in poverty (Wang et al, 2019; Jensen, 2013b). Fullarton's (2002) national study in Australia showed that sport was the only area where boys were more engaged than girls. In Scotland, PE remains popular among boys from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, possibly due to the more equitable environment it provides (SQA, 2024a).

PE offers benefits like improved engagement (Owen et al, 2016), socio-moral development (Miller et al, 1997), and transferable skills (Bailey, 2006). Studies have linked PE enjoyment to higher school engagement (Gray et al, 2019a), though research remains dated. Still, PE is not enjoyable for all. Issues like bullying and exclusion persist (Cardinal et al, 2013; Kirk, 1982).

'Dominant boys' in PE, often those with physical and social capital, can influence others' experiences negatively (Jachyra, 2016). Masculine behaviours shaped by socioeconomic background (Campbell et al, 2018; Bourdieu, 1986) may lead to exclusion or even abuse (Hickey, 2008), reinforcing stereotypes and discomfort among peers, particularly girls (Ennis, 1999; Gray et al, 2019b).

In conclusion, PE is both a potential haven and a site of tension for socioeconomically disadvantaged boys. The review highlights significant gaps in understanding their perspectives and experiences, justifying the following research questions: (1) What are the key factors that shape socioeconomically disadvantaged boys' PE experiences? (2) How do disadvantaged boys' experiences impact others? (3) How can these consequences be overcome?

# TEACHERS, INEQUALITY AND WIDENING ACCESS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY IN SCOTLAND.

Fraser Clark, University of Edinburgh

## Abstract

This study explores the role of teachers in Scotland in the implementation of widening access (WA) policies in higher education (HE), particularly in supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds (SIMD20/40). Through a critical literature review and a detailed qualitative research plan, I examine how systemic challenges influence WA practice and how teachers perceive and enact their role within this context. The study seeks to bridge the gap between policy ambition and classroom realities, offering insights into how WA initiatives can become more inclusive, sustainable, and equitable. Below is a section-by-section summary.

## 1. Literature Review: Context and Teacher Role

This section establishes the importance of higher education as a pathway for social mobility and the significance of national efforts to increase participation among students from deprived backgrounds. I identify a significant gap in how the role of teachers has been acknowledged in WA discussions, arguing that they are central figures in the implementation of equitable access policies. Teachers' potential is often limited by inadequate resources, lack of training, and ambiguous policy guidance.

### *Policy and Programme Analysis*

Using Riddell, Blackburn and Minty's (2013) framework of "getting in, staying in, and getting on," I explore policy interventions and support mechanisms at various stages of the student journey into HE. I discuss the benefits and limitations of contextual admissions, mentoring schemes, and transitional support programmes. Despite positive impacts,

many of these initiatives are underfunded or short-lived, and systemic inequalities persist across the HE landscape.

### *Gaps in the Research*

A significant concern throughout the literature is the dominance of quantitative measures focused on attainment, rather than exploring the lived experiences of students and educators. I advocate for a shift toward more qualitative, person-centred research that highlights the cultural and structural dimensions of inequality in WA efforts. I also stress the need for inclusive institutional reform, not just widened entry points.

## 2. Research Plan: Aim and Methodology

In response to the literature, I outline a qualitative, interpretivist research design focused on gathering teacher perspectives through semi-structured interviews. The purpose is to better understand how teachers perceive their WA role and how they manage systemic challenges in supporting disadvantaged students. I justify the use of thematic analysis and a flexible, context-sensitive approach to explore emerging themes.

### *Participants and Ethics*

Participants will be selected using purposive sampling, targeting secondary school teachers with experience in WA contexts. Ethical considerations include strict confidentiality, voluntary participation, and compliance with BERA and SERA guidelines. I also reflect on my positionality as a researcher and acknowledge how my experiences and assumptions may shape the research process.

### 3. Findings and Implications

The study is grounded in my own observations during school placements, where I witnessed opportunity gaps and teacher ambivalence toward WA responsibilities. Through this research, I hope to offer insights that inform policy development, teacher training, and institutional practice to create a more coherent and supportive WA framework that genuinely addresses educational inequality.

This abstract encapsulates both the theoretical grounding and practical design of my dissertation, outlining how the study seeks to respond to current gaps and contribute meaningfully to the field of widening access in Scottish education

# WHAT DOES PHYSICAL LITERACY MEAN AND LOOK LIKE TO ADULTS WITH A PHYSICAL DISABILITY?

Grace Stirling, University of Stirling

## Introduction

In Scotland, only 49% of disabled people meet the physical activity guidelines compared to 79% of the non-disabled population (Scottish Government, 2023). Various pieces of research points to physical literacy as a way to improve low physical activity levels (Jurbala, 2015; Pushkarenko, Dunn and Wohlers, 2021) and to engage disabled people in lifelong physical activity (Coates, 2011; Farrey and Isard, 2015; Pushkarenko, Dunn and Wohlers, 2021). Likewise, recent research by the Observatory for Sport in Scotland called for future research to improve the understanding of physical literacy for the disabled population was (Davison et al., 2023).

Often viewed as a lifelong journey (Whitehead, 2010), physical literacy is “the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.” (IPLA, 2017). Despite claims that physical literacy is fundamentally inclusive (Dugas, 2016; Whitehead, 2010), physical literacy for disabled people remains under-researched (Pushkarenko, Dunn and Wohlers, 2021). Furthermore, it is argued that the current practitioner understanding and application of physical literacy for the disabled population is insufficient to make long-lasting change to the development of PL for the disabled population and their physical activity levels. In order to positively develop an individual's physical literacy throughout their life, it is important to understand the lived experience of the people that are being targeted (Sport NZ, n.d.) yet the lived experience of disabled people has often been overlook in physical literacy research.

This blog shares the findings and implications of a recent undergraduate major project which aimed to provide an understanding of what physical literacy means and looks like to adults with a physical disability. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2022) and the Socio-ecological Model, this study used the voices and lived experience of disabled people to provide a valuable and much-needed insight into physical literacy for the physically disabled population.

## Key Findings

Through semi-structured interviews with each participant, the participants shared various experiences and perspectives related to what physical literacy means and looks like to them. These meaning and experiences are presented in figure 1.

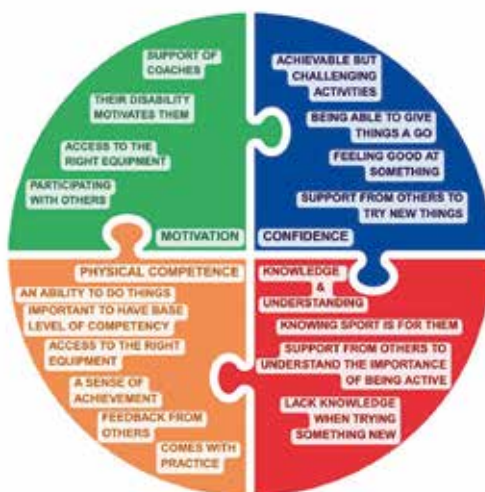


Figure 1: What the individual domains of physical literacy mean and look like to adults with a physical disability.

Additionally, the study identified three themes which reflect how the participants understand and experience physical literacy:

The participants' accounts revealed how there was no fixed definition or experience of physical literacy common across all participants. Their understanding of physical literacy was developed through various sport and physical activity experiences. This echoes the unique and individual nature of Whitehead's (2010) physical literacy philosophy. The findings emphasised the need to step away from a one-size-fits-all solution to understanding and developing physical literacy, and instead practitioners should seek to utilise person-centred approaches to ensure that each individual has the ability to develop physical literacy in a way that is personal to them. Participants shared how person-centred approaches provides them with feelings of belonging and achievement and feeling like they mattered.

Interestingly, while previous research argued that there is too great a focus on the physical domain of physical literacy in existing research contributing to ableist physical literacy practices, physical competence was the most prominent domain discussed by the participants. Central to the participants' experiences of physical literacy, was the feeling of physical competence which each participant described in ways that were unique and individual to each participant. While this study acknowledges the value of a holistic approach as advocated by Cornish et al. (2020), its findings on physical competence highlight the importance of not overlooking the domain or dismissing it as purely ableist.

Early engagement in sport and physical activity was described as fundamental for participation in

sport and physical activity throughout their life and participants described the life-long effects of having limited sport and physical activity experiences as a child. While there is no existing research on the relationship between previous physical activity experience and the development of physical literacy for disabled people, Elsborg et al.'s (2021) research on this relationship for non-disabled adults support this study's findings. Previous experience helped the participants feel more confident and competent in participating in sport and physical activity as an adult and this highlights the importance of providing opportunities for disabled children.

Despite the importance of person-centred approaches, sport and physical activity is not an isolated experience, and participants valued being able to interact with others when being active. Additionally, the support from an educated workforce was viewed as crucial in providing positive and meaningful sport and physical activity experiences. The importance of embedding disability inclusion in training and professional development was evident throughout the interviews.

## Implications

While, this study supported many existing arguments presented in physical literacy research this study provided a new and unique perspective on physical literacy. Through using the lived experience of disabled people in the research methods, this research has provided an insight into physically disabled adults' first-hand understanding and experiences related to physical literacy.

Based on the findings, 4 recommendations are presented:

1. All practitioners adopt person-centred approaches in their work.
2. Practitioners to change the way they view competency.
3. Physical literacy for disabled people needs to be part of physical literacy education and training.
4. Research into the current physical activity participation of disabled children in Scotland.

These recommendations are based on the findings relating to the experiences of a small group of participants with a physical disability. The purpose of the study was never to generate generalisable conclusions for the whole disabled population, but instead to provide an insight on the experiences and perspectives of adults with a physical disability related to PL which could be used to inform future actions.

## Final Thoughts

This research offers a unique and important insight into physical literacy for the disabled population and reminds us of the importance of utilising lived experience to educate ourselves and our practices. The findings spotlight the importance of person-centred approaches where every individual's ability and journey in sport and physical activity is recognised. In order to most effectively develop practices and solutions to address issues within sport and physical activity, we must consult, listen and act on the voices and experiences of individuals from all populations and backgrounds. With the recent introduction of the new Active Scotland Outcome

“More People, More Active, More Often” (Scottish Government, 2024), tackling physical inactivity remains a key priority of the Scottish Government and therefore it is essential that policies, practices and interventions are inclusive to ensure that disabled people and other vulnerable group are neither forgotten nor left behind. Every practitioner in physical education, sport and physical activity has the ability to support the development of physical literacy in those they work with and if we are serious about making the people of Scotland a more healthier and active population, then inclusion has to be the foundation of our work, our training and our policies.

## POVERTY LINKING WITH EDUCATION

Millie Stark, University of Strathclyde

The current education system in Scotland is the Curriculum for Excellence (CFE). The outcome for the curriculum is to develop a well-rounded child in that they are a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen, and an effective contributor (Education Scotland, 2023). Furthermore, the curriculum hopes for these capacities to develop lifelong skills that they can take into the working world. These skills can be enhanced further out with schools with attendance in clubs and activities (Buckley and Lee, 2021). This raises the issues of pupil's background and privileges that they may or may not encounter. Bullock, et.al, 2010 imply that those who are considered more affluent are seen as more likely to participate in sports out with school whereas Muir & Gracey (2007) imply children from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to have this opportunity. Researchers have found that children in poverty rank 20% lower in cognitive development when compared to children in affluent areas (Dickerson and Popli, 2016). This in turn highlights the importance of a strong education system as for many children living in poverty it is their only chance to develop these life skills.

It has been claimed that poverty is passed on from generations and is a cycle that needs to be broken Barnardos (2007). Research has alluded to education being a key component to break this cycle and help to guide pupils out of poverty (Barnardos, 2007). However, McCluskey (2017) claims that within schools there is a worry regarding engagement. McKinney et.al, (2012) agrees that there is an engagement problem within schools but in relation to pupils in poverty. Adelman, Middleton, and Ashworth (2003) indicates that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are at higher risks of exclusion by schools or to exclude themselves. Hirsch (2008) reports that these children who do not

engage or attend school will be more likely to face challenges in school and result in lower exam grades. Shapira et.al, (2023) findings report that pupils in poverty are less likely to attend a high achieving school due to the location of their house. This is measured through The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). A challenge with this way of measurement is the statistics are not individualised but are generalised surrounding the geographical areas of Scotland. Consequently, not all children living in poverty are living in areas of deprivation, and it can also not be certain that every child living in areas of deprivation will be living in poverty (Clelland and Hill, 2019).

Borbely et.al (2022) implies that there are students that are missed with the level of poverty they are in due to living in high level SIMD areas but for unknown circumstances find themselves in deprivation. This could be down to single income households or being unpaid carers. However, it is claimed that there is a high chance of the location of housing being correlated to state of deprivation affirming the use of SIMD measurement.

Young people living in poverty have their engagement within education affected by different reasons therefore, this section will look closely into a child's experience in school and the effect it has on their engagement. The World Health Organisation (2013) reports that a person's mental health is when an individual comes to terms with their capabilities and how they handle the stress of life in which they can channel this stress to work effectively in order to contribute to their community. Furthermore, a child's mental health can affect their emotions and behaviour in schools. Scottish Government (2017b) explores the need for social justice and how teacher professionalism and their pedagogy can impact on the learning environment that is created for children

in schools. Moreover, it is important for schools to have a safe and trusting environment to ensure children from all backgrounds feel secure and at ease within them.

Beckett and Wrigley (2014) reports that teachers often have preconceived opinions for children living in poverty. Gorski (2012) agrees as their work indicates that stereotypes are inevitable for people living in poverty. However, they also imply that stereotypes are not always a negative concept and can help inform people of the reasons behind behaviour which in this case would be lack of engagement. Heberle and Carter (2020) implies that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds have a higher chance of having behaviour problems. Moreover, Jervis (2006) highlights that although there are benefits to stereotypes in terms of knowledge being built, they can create a person's self-worth to be questioned. Researchers reported that pupils living in poverty are at greater risk of having low-self-esteem in comparison to peers in affluent areas (Mikulášková and Adamkovič 2018). Wuepper and Lybbert (2017) strengthens this view by suggesting there is a stigma around poverty in which affects a person's view and value of themselves. Resulting in low self-worth and low motivation within tasks. This in turn presents the risk of pupils disengagement and self-exclusion.

Peer and social pressure can also have an impact on the way a child perceives themselves, so much so that Lawson and Lawson (2020) claim that children living in poverty often experience social isolation. Johnson (2019) agrees by highlighting pupils in poverty often experience bullying and become a target of their peers. Bullying often stems from someone being different, this can be through the way someone looks, dresses, acts or even comes from (Conn, 2014). Leading pupils who find themselves in this category feeling left on the sidelines and

questioning their self-worth. Consequently, Estell and Perdue (2013) believes that a person's social circle has an immense impact on a person's outlook and engagement within education. Therefore, children living in poverty experiencing bullying and self-esteem issues will struggle when trying to engage in whole class activities or smaller group tasks. Highlighting that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are at high risk of disengagement due to social pressures and society norms.

Highlighted above are some clear issues behind the stigma of poverty and the effects it has on pupils' mental health and self-perception of themselves. These challenges do not only affect a child internally but can have an impact on their external behaviours. For some children in these conditions, they tend to shut off and become quieter and less involved in their work (Mowat 2020). Whereas, Frey, Edstrom and Hirschstein (2009) disagrees by suggesting children who experience low self-worth and/or bullying due to their background have built up anger that leads to outburst within school and disturbing lessons. However, both are examples of behaviour that results in disengagement and exclusion that is the pupils choice or due to other people's doing. Thus, it is clear that children living in poverty experience different situations that ultimately affect their mindset when present in a school environment.

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN SCOTTISH PRIMARY CLASSROOMS: EXPLORING THE USE OF MOVEMENT BREAKS

Ashley Willis, University of Stirling

## Synopsis:

This brief article summarises my PhD research exploring primary teachers' behaviours of using movement breaks in their classrooms. It aims to identify and discuss current barriers and facilitators to increasing children's daily movement opportunities while in the classroom. A deeper understanding of these factors and their causes may help to successfully build lasting interventions and solutions.

In the United Kingdom, the Chief Medical Officer recommends that children and young people aged 5-17 partake in at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily (Department of Health and Social Care, 2019). These recommendations stem from the World Health Organization (WHO), which emphasises physical activity (PA) across the lifespan and calls for policies in multiple settings to support engagement. Specifically, PA within school settings is essential for lifelong physical and mental health and academic success (WHO, 2018).

Reporting from the Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance's Global Matrix 4.0 offers a deeper dive into the state of PA of children and young people in multiple countries by scoring them in categories like *overall physical activity and sedentary behaviours*, to name a few (Tremblay *et al.*, 2022). Scotland received scores of "incomplete" due to lack of reporting capabilities in critical categories like *overall physical activity*, *active play*, and *physical fitness*. Meanwhile, *sedentary behaviours*, received a failing score. This highlights a need to increase data collection and tracking and calls attention to gaps between PA in Scottish policy and practice.

In Scottish schools, the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) outlines desired experiences for children regarding physical education (PE), PA, and sport. CfE states that there is a responsibility for all staff to deliver these outcomes, yet they are widely expected to be completed outside the classroom setting as

part of the PE curriculum (Mullender-Wijnsma *et al.*, 2015). Bringing movement into the classroom may help to address Scotland's Global Matrix 4.0 scores while supporting WHO PA recommendations.

A small-scale intervention with 5 primary teachers from the Edinburgh and West Lothian regions of Scotland explored teachers' use of movement breaks. A behaviour change approach was used to identify potential barriers and facilitators to teachers' use of movement breaks in their classrooms. During the 6-week study, teachers from P4 and P5 stages used movement breaks at least three times a day at their discretion. The perspectives and experiences gathered are highlighted below:

- There is a wide range of resources available, including digital and printed materials. Those that link learning content to movement were well-received by teachers. The response from the students was overwhelmingly positive with every class asking for more or reminding their teacher when it was time for a movement break.
- PA during the movement breaks was flexible and adaptable to each class's needs, including differentiation for children with additional support needs. The movement breaks were also a reminder of the benefits of continuing more active learning beyond the early stages where play-based activities are more common.

- Managing behaviour was a main concern for the teachers. Setting clear expectations, establishing a daily routine, and being flexible about when to use the movement breaks were key takeaways.
- Many of the teachers stressed the importance of having PA in the classroom embedded in the wider school community. Many teachers desired to feel part of a larger initiative with more support from leadership and colleagues.

These takeaways offer insight into what may work on a wider scale while recognising the current barriers many teachers may face when increasing PA in their classrooms. Future studies exploring a Whole School Approach to implementation and gathering evidence on how well the movement breaks increase children's PA daily are necessary to further explore PA in primary classrooms.

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## About the Author:

Ashley Willis is a PhD student at the University of Stirling. She taught elementary education in the United States before completing an MRes at Stirling in primary education. Her interest in PA in classrooms stems from her own teaching experience and a desire to see more children engaging in regular, daily movement. Her PhD supervisors are Dr Joe Cowley and Dr Andy Kirkland.

# TGFU AND TACTICAL AWARENESS IN PRIMARY PE

Eve Cunningham, University of Strathclyde

## Abstract

This dissertation investigates the implementation of the Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) model within a Primary 6 class in a Scottish mainstream primary school. The study aimed to explore the model's effectiveness in developing pupils' tactical awareness and understanding of gameplay during invasion games, while also assessing its broader impact on social and cognitive skills. With a growing emphasis on holistic approaches to Physical Education (PE) and health and wellbeing within Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), this research examines how game-centred pedagogies, such as TGfU, can enhance physical literacy and promote inclusive, meaningful PE experiences for all learners.

The study employed a qualitative research design, utilising thematic analysis to evaluate weekly pupil reflections, teacher observations, and lesson evaluations collected over a six-week PE block. Pupils participated in structured PE lessons centred on six tactical elements of invasion games: maintaining possession, creating space, attacking the goal, defending the goal, defending space, and regaining possession. These lessons followed the TGfU cycle, incorporating modified gameplay, questioning, skill development, and tactical application.

Findings suggest that the TGfU model was effective in supporting children's tactical development, as well as fostering key social skills, including communication, teamwork, and decision-making. Over the six weeks, pupil responses demonstrated increasing sophistication in tactical language and strategic reflection. The model's emphasis on

questioning and reflection contributed significantly to this progression, encouraging learners to take ownership of their learning and critically evaluate their performance.

In addition to cognitive and social gains, the TGfU model aligned strongly with the aims of Scotland's CfE, particularly in promoting the four capacities: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors. The model also proved adaptable for a mixed-ability class in an area of significant socio-economic deprivation, offering a differentiated yet inclusive approach to teaching team games.

However, the research also identified challenges, including the reliance on written reflection, which may have limited some pupils' ability to express their learning due to literacy barriers. Additionally, time constraints and access to PE facilities limited the scope of the study. Despite these limitations, this research supports the potential of TGfU as an effective, engaging, and inclusive pedagogical model that can enhance PE provision in Scottish primary schools.

Overall, the findings indicate that TGfU not only deepens tactical understanding but also fosters meaningful engagement, making it a valuable tool in supporting pupils' physical, social, and cognitive development in line with contemporary educational priorities.

# TEACHERS, INEQUALITY AND WIDENING ACCESS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY IN SCOTLAND.

Chloe Rae, University of Edinburgh

Teaching was once identified as one of the top three most stressful professions around the world (Gold & Roth, 1993; Taylor et al., 2021), with many teachers choosing to leave the profession within their first five years. The main reasons for this are stress, poor pupil behaviour and a lack of support (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; Chang, 2009). Scotland's largest teacher's union, the Education Information System (EIS), published data from a survey of over 16,000 teachers which found 70% of teachers in Scotland feel stressed 'frequently' or 'all of the time' within their job (2021, pg. 9). Half of the participants described their wellbeing at work as either 'poor' or 'very poor', with almost 60% stating they would not recommend teaching as a career.

The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) Teacher Wellbeing Survey, published in 2022, of nearly 12,000 teachers found 90% of teachers had experienced more stress in the previous year, citing their job as having a negative effect on their overall mental health. Alongside their feelings of stress, more than 80% of teachers identified higher anxiety levels as a direct result of their increasing stress levels. This leads to pressure both in their personal and professional life, with many teachers struggling to find a balance (Bubb & Earley, 2004). Clearly, this is an important issue that needs to be addressed to protect and support teachers and the overall teaching profession.

Many factors can contribute to the development of stress and burnout for teachers. They are under pressure to ensure pupils attain high grades in high-stakes exams (Grissom et al., 2017), as well as having to manage pupil misbehaviour (Brady, McDaniel & Choi, 2022) and an excessive workload (Kyriacou, 2001), which significantly impacts their stress levels. Pupil misbehaviour can lead to teachers becoming emotionally exhausted from the amount of time and effort they have spent trying to correct the behaviour

(Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2020; Brady, McDaniel & Choi, 2022). Kokkinos (2007) and Brady, McDaniel & Choi (2022) all suggest that pupil misbehaviour is a contributing factor to teacher stress and burnout with teachers developing negative feelings towards pupils, as well as the profession as a whole, which can lead to them becoming insecure about their ability to manage their class effectively.

From the NASUWT Teacher Wellbeing Survey (2022), it was found that over 80% of teachers have experienced increased levels of anxiety and sleep deprivation, which is supported by Greenberg et al. (2016) and Ansley et al. (2021) who found that overwhelming feelings of stress and burnout are negatively impacting sleep, making teachers more fatigued and experiencing disturbances in sleep. 66% of teachers surveyed stated that their workplace did not have enough wellbeing measures to 'monitor and manage stress and burnout' (NASUWT, 2022, pg. 3). It is vital that solutions are put in place to prevent stress and burnout, protecting the mental and physical wellbeing of staff.

In conclusion, teaching remains one of the most stressful professions, with many educators experiencing significant challenges that negatively impact their mental and physical well-being. Factors such as excessive workload, pupil misbehaviour, and the pressure to achieve high student outcomes contribute to heightened stress levels, anxiety, and burnout. The alarming statistics from both the EIS and NASUWT surveys highlight the urgency of addressing these issues, as a substantial proportion of teachers report poor workplace well-being and, quite worryingly, would not recommend the profession to others. To safeguard the future of education and retain skilled professionals, it is imperative for educational institutions and policymakers to prioritise effective strategies to reduce stress, promote teacher well-being, and create a supportive working environment. Only by taking these steps can we ensure a sustainable and thriving teaching workforce.

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# SATPE Webinars 2025-2026

DATE	TOPIC	PRESENTER	SIGN UP LINK
AUG 26TH (1700-1800)	TACKLING ADVANCED HIGHER PE PROJECT (L7)	AARON ANDERSON (PT HWB at BELL BAXTER HIGH SCHOOL)	<a href="https://forms.gle/kUHM9rUUrGcqJbNe7">https://forms.gle/kUHM9rUUrGcqJbNe7</a>
SEPT 15th (1700-1800)	NATIONAL 5 PORTFOLIO GUIDE (L5)	KEVAN BRYDEN (PT at MARR COLLEGE)	<a href="https://forms.gle/Eb4kxqvFWpWQTTt5">https://forms.gle/Eb4kxqvFWpWQTTt5</a>
OCT 27th (1700-1800)	EXERCISE & FITNESS LEADERSHIP (L6) DELIVERY EXAMPLE	EUAN CASSELLS (PT at INVERKIETHING HS)	<a href="https://forms.gle/GqcRtvNuQZyivyhN6">https://forms.gle/GqcRtvNuQZyivyhN6</a>
NOV 10th (1700-1800)	COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN PE	DR CARA LAMB (LECTURER at STRATHCLYDE UNIVERSITY)	<a href="https://forms.gle/ZXKYmxYfw0ZWkuaR6">https://forms.gle/ZXKYmxYfw0ZWkuaR6</a>
DEC 15th (1700-1800)	LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN A PE DEPARTMENT	JOHN MILLAR (PT at NEWBATTLE HS)	<a href="https://forms.gle/98LQpeMFtNdhf7E49">https://forms.gle/98LQpeMFtNdhf7E49</a>
JAN 19th (1700-1800)	HIGHER TEACHING & LEARNING STRATEGIES (L6)	RITCHIE DURNO (PT at TRINITY HS)	<a href="https://forms.gle/gbZpCNvzu1X4Pagc9">https://forms.gle/gbZpCNvzu1X4Pagc9</a>
FEB 9th (1700-1800)	PRIMARY PE EXAMPLE	STEVE WAIDE (BEYOND THE PHYSICAL)	<a href="https://forms.gle/HkMNgaHedSaBhqxAg8">https://forms.gle/HkMNgaHedSaBhqxAg8</a>
MAR 9th (1700-1800)	SPORT & RECREATION (L5) DELIVERY EXAMPLE	ASHLEY MONTGOMERY (PT at MCLAREN HS) & CIARAN WOOD (PT at GIRVAN ACADEMY)	<a href="https://forms.gle/hgwYyPrUuWvbpj8TA">https://forms.gle/hgwYyPrUuWvbpj8TA</a>
APR 27th (1700-1800)	GIRLS ENGAGEMENT IN PE	LOUISE HACKING (PE SCHOLAR)	<a href="https://forms.gle/Pdckp6JGBN46rZmx9">https://forms.gle/Pdckp6JGBN46rZmx9</a>
MAY 18th (1700-1800)	MOTIVATION THEORY IN PE	CAMERON STEWART (LECTURER at UWS)	<a href="https://forms.gle/kew6fZxbeHwk1cmP9">https://forms.gle/kew6fZxbeHwk1cmP9</a>
JUN 15th (1700-1800)	GOLD SCHOOL SPORT AWARD	AILSA WYLIE (SPORTSCOTLAND)	<a href="https://forms.gle/i93pg4QbPHNyeofd9">https://forms.gle/i93pg4QbPHNyeofd9</a>



# SATPE “SHINE” TEACHER AWARD

This award honours a Physical Education teacher who goes above and beyond in every aspect of their role – leading with passion, innovation and has a lasting impact on learners, colleagues and the school community.

This award honours a Physical Education teacher who goes above and beyond in every aspect of their role – leading with passion, innovation and has a lasting impact on learners, colleagues and the school community.

## SHINE CRITERIA

### **S – Success & engagement for all**

Creates inclusive and engaging learning environments, committed to ensuring success for all

### **H – Health & Wellbeing Advocate**

Promotes physical literacy and lifelong learning, takes a holistic approach to developing physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing

### **I – Innovative practice**

Actively pursues learning opportunities and contributes to the growth of colleagues through sharing good practice

### **N – Nurturing environment**

Nurtures positive relationships, creates a safe and supportive learning environment

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Leads initiatives at both curricular and extra-curricular level to promote HWB and inspire learners to value PE, Sport and Physical Activity



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SATPE are delighted to announce our latest partnership with **Legacy Comps** and introduce the **SATPE Legacy Fund**.

The aim of the SATPE Legacy Fund is to support young people and remove any barriers to their participation in PE, sport or physical activity and help them create their own legacy. This fund is open to schools and individuals to apply for small grants, via SATPE with the aim of supporting any young people who require additional support to take part in any PE or sport related activities. To apply for a small grant via the SATPE Legacy Fund on behalf of an individual or school, please use the link below:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdu7rERIBgNYsnIM2cj22Lai2-olKAap0K1kEYytW20KkRiUw/>

***\*Please note that in order to apply for this grant you must be a SATPE members or member school***

*Legacy Comps are run by former St. Mirren player, manager and CEO **Tony Fitzpatrick**. Tony has very kindly donated **£500 to SATPE's Legacy fund** and further funds can be raised by purchasing tickets from Legacy Comps*

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# Having a Ball in the last year of School

Cameron Keay



***As a 6th year pupil in Gleniffer High School in Paisley, Cameron Keay was going through the same journey as many senior pupils who were gearing up for the end of an era as the school year drew to a close; exams (including Higher PE!) volunteering, staff vs pupils fundraising match (the teachers won!), and planning for prom. But, in addition, Cameron also had to juggle his studies with a part time football career at Greenock Morton. This led to selection for Scotland School Boys Under 18s.***

***Cameron shares his story below.***

Like many young people, I have had an interest and passion in football from an early age. I played for several local teams in Renfrewshire as well as school teams in both primary and secondary. I have valued the support and investment of many coaches, in both football and wider fitness training, over the last thirteen or so years. My final year at school brought with it a particular honour which will always remain special.

I was lucky enough to qualify for the Scottish School Boys U18's this year and relished the chance to represent Scotland in various matches. I was honoured to be nominated Captain; leading my country at an international level was one of the proudest and most surreal moments of my life. To be given that honour and trust was one of the greatest responsibilities ever put on me. As a famous fixture against England approached, one in which Scotland had never won, I was ready to go and lead my country to victory. I had a gut feeling that day and it was more than correct. An 8 goal thriller, a record 6-2 win, and to top it all off, scoring 4 of those winning goals and taking home the match ball was amazing.

Furthermore, to have over 20 members of close family and friends in the stand that day made me reflect on how lucky I am and how much dedication and resilience – from many – it has taken for me to get to where I am today. I have had plenty of rejection throughout my career, but days like the 28th of February 2025 made it all worth it. The performance led to a greater recognition from my club, and within a month I had scored my first goal for Morton's first team. The feeling of celebrating in front of the fans and seeing what it meant to them was something that will stay with me for a long time. I have yet to "make it" of course, but I think the past year has given me great fundamentals on which to build. Following being awarded my first Scotland Cap, a motion was read in the Scottish Parliament which commended my 'contribution to Scottish Sport' and I also received a trophy from school in recognition of my 'outstanding achievement to sport'. All of these are much appreciated.

**Cameron Keay**



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