

# Delivering Active Play

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Aidan Gallacher from Agile is working with the Go2Play to support the training of Venture staff in delivering Active Play.



The University of Strathclyde is working in partnership with Go2play through an MPhil Studentship for: '*Quantitative Evaluation of Active Play Interventions in Partnership with Inspiring Scotland*'. Professor John J Reilly (Physical Activity for Health Group) will supervise this research.



Fiona Ellis of Arrivo is working with Go2Play Ventures to support the evaluation of the Active Play activity.



Inspiring Scotland works in partnership with the Scottish Government on Go2Play



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## 1. Introduction

Inspiring Scotland is an innovative outcome focused venture philanthropy organisation designed and developed in response to the needs of Scotland's charities. Inspiring Scotland aims to tackle social issues in a different way, bringing greater cohesion and, through this, higher impact.

Go2Play is one of the funds we have developed, delivered and managed by working in close partnership with the Scottish Government. Within Go2Play there are 3 areas of activity for the 2015/2016 financial year.

- **Play Rangers**
- **Active Play**
- **Family Support and Play**

Our **Active Play** fund tackles some of Scotland's most important challenges – physical inactivity, increasing sedentary behaviour and rising childhood obesity. Building on the shared learnings from a previous Go2Play pilot delivered by PEEK, the Active Play fund aims to develop a model of intervention which will address the decline in physical activity coupled with the increase in sedentary behaviour. The legacy of Active Play will influence early years and health policy to help make Scotland the best place to grow up.

This booklet has been developed for the play staff who will be involved in the delivery of Active Play.

Active Play is focused on developing children's physical literacy and fundamental movement skills (FMS) during fun play sessions. Making sessions fun and play focused is critical as research tells us that children must enjoy acquiring FMS to ensure that they develop a positive relationship with being active.

The four key outcomes the projects will deliver are:

- Children develop physical literacy/ fundamental movement skills
- Children increase levels of physical activity
- Children progress into more active forms of play and into sports
- Awareness of play as a means to improved physical literacy is increased

Theory and research around the stages of children's development, including FMS and physical literacy, has been reviewed in the development of the Active Play Fund. This material is summarised in the *About Active Play* booklet, however two definitions are provided below as a helpful reference when reading and using this resource.

## Definition of physical literacy:

*Physical Literacy can be described as the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding that provides children with the movement foundation for lifelong participation in physical activity. Enabling them to be physically literate supports their development as competent, confident and healthy movers (Whitehead, 2014).*

## Definition of fundamental movement skills:

*Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) are the movement patterns that involve different body parts. They are the foundation movements or precursor patterns to the more specialised, complex skills used in play, games, sports, dance, gymnastics, outdoor education and physical recreation.*

**You can read more about physical activity in section 3 of the *About Active Play* book along with further information on physical literacy and fundamental movement skills in section 4.**

As with all projects the quality and consistency of delivery is critical to the overall success of the programme. This book and the complementary training has been developed to provide play workers with support and guidance in the delivery of Active Play sessions. A guide and suggested structure for session delivery is provided along with links to the British Heart Foundation delivery resources that play workers may find useful.



## 2. What is Active Play?

In its most simple terms, Active Play is about children playing games, having fun and developing through the process.

In an ideal world this would happen without adult involvement, however, for a number of reasons this is not consistently the case and this is having serious long term repercussions. Active Play sessions provide a solution to this problem by providing a setting in which children can develop through the introduction to fun games, the opportunity to lead their own play and create their own games.

During early pilot work a free play approach was adopted where children were provided with basic play and sports equipment in a variety of community play spaces. The children were supported and encouraged by play workers however there was no specific focus on any games, activities or FMS- the sessions were entirely child led.

The evaluation of this work indicated that an entirely free play approach did not provide certainty that all FMS were being covered and measuring progress proved difficult. To ensure that all FMS are covered and developed properly, we must provide at least some structure and guidance within the sessions. A basic delivery model and guidance on session facilitation are provided below.

## 3. Delivery Model

The fun aspect of sessions is what motivates children and this must remain at core of all session delivery. On top of the fun, we want to make sure that all children have the chance to develop a full range of FMS and physical literacy.

To this end, a semi-structured delivery model has been developed within which:

- **The first half of the session is led by the play worker** with a warm up and games focused on the development of one or more FMS.
- **The second half of the session is child led play** with the play worker supporting the children to create their own games and activities that further develop the FMS.

By implementing this structure and providing leadership in the first half of the session we can go further in ensuring that the children are learning a broad range of FMS, are all actively engaged and learning new games they can play and adapt away from the sessions. There are a number of important aspects to consider in the delivery of Active Play sessions

- The structure of sessions
- Age
- Leading and adapting activities
- Setting and weather
- Equipment
- The role of the play leader

## 4. The structure of sessions

To ensure there is consistency across all of the delivery sites and change can be monitored the basic delivery structure outlined should be followed for all sessions.

Each session should be focused on achieving the following three outcomes:

- 1) To develop FMS through games and play;
- 2) Children develop their own games that develop FMS and physical literacy;
- 3) All children are involved and have fun!

In working towards these outcomes the following structure and approach is suggested. Regardless of timing, age and setting each session should have two main sections that include the following:

- 1) **Play worker led games**- including a warm up and games focused on the development of one or more FMS;
- 2) **Child led play** with encouragement from play workers to continue the development of movement skills used in the first section of the session.

### Play worker led games

#### *Warm up game*

This section will last approximately 10 minutes and be led by the play worker. The aim of the activity is to warm the muscles prior to any more extended movements, get all the children engaged and start the fun!

Examples of warm up games can be found in the The British Heart Foundation resources. Further guidance on these resources and their relevance to different ages is covered in more detail in sections 5 and 10 of this book.

#### *Fundamental Movement Skill Game*

The second section of the Active Play session will be a play worker led game that encourages the development of one or more related fundamental movement skills. This section will last around 30 minutes or whatever length sensible in the context of the session and long enough for the children to take the basic skills into their own play.

All games will involve children utilising a number of FMS, however play workers should plan their delivery to focus on a focused skill or skills each week making it easier for the play workers to manage the delivery and evaluate the progress of the children. Each session a different FMS will be the focus of the game or activity during this section.

The Delivery Guides found in sections 11 and 12 of this book suggest a schedule of FMS to be covered in each session across a 32 week programme.

As with section one, delivery ideas can be found in the British Heart Foundation resource packs. Play workers are also encouraged to make up their own games and share them with others.

## Child led Play

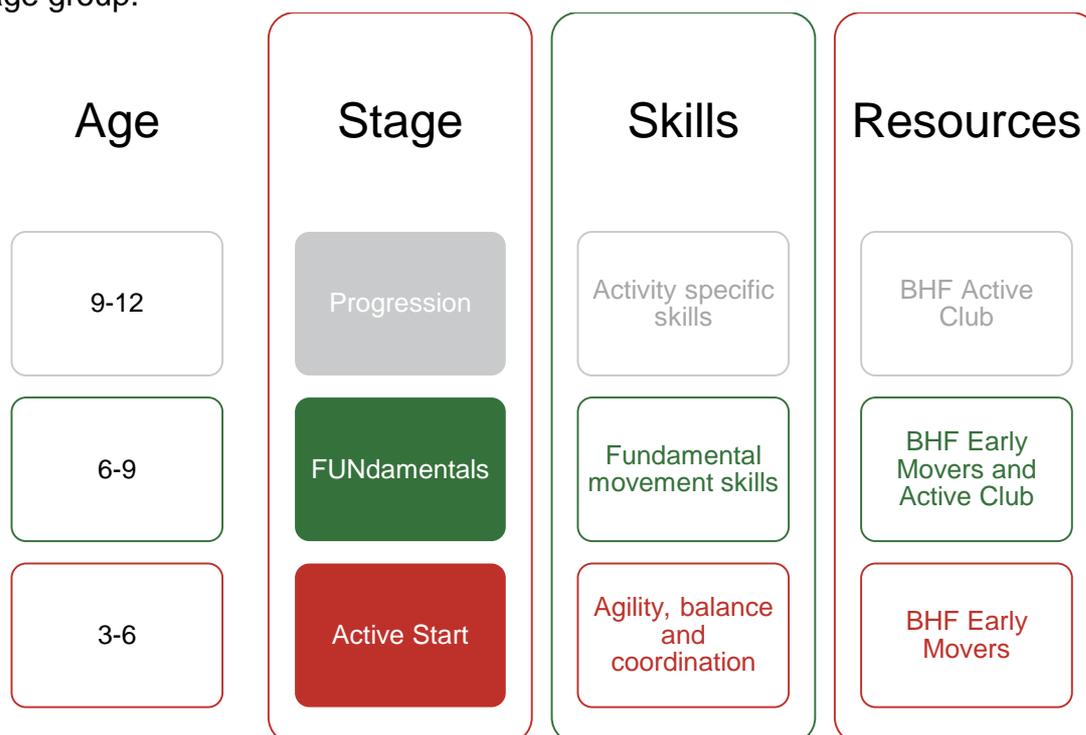
The final section of the Active Play session is child led play. During these sessions the children are encouraged to progress and develop the skills they have been using during games and activities led by the play worker. Children should be encouraged to adapt and change the activities to make new games and explore new settings, additional pieces of equipment and any variations they find fun. This section of the session is focused on building the confidence of children to create their own games and enjoy active play without the support and direction of adults.

During this section, play workers should focus on ensuring that all children are equally engaged, having fun and are active!

## 5. Age and stage

The age and developmental stage of the children is another consideration within the delivery of Active Play, due to the potentially broad age range of children attending (3-12 years).

The following section provides guidance on what activities and resources are relevant to children of different ages and how this relates to the delivery model described above. Included are suggested British Heart Foundation (BHF) resources that provide further support material, example games and activities relating to that age group.



Younger children (3-6 years) are in the early stages of developing movement skills and need time to build these before being capable of progressing into more advanced skills. Activities for this young age group should focus on the development of agility, balance and coordination through simple fun games.

In the older age ranges (6-12 years) children should be acquiring a range of FMS across the areas outlined below while being offered the chance to try and progress into a range of specific sports and activities.

### Travelling Skills

- Climbing
- Hopping
- Jumping
- Leaping
- Running
- Sliding
- Swinging
- Skipping

### Object Control Skills

- Sending
  - Kicking
  - Rolling (ball)
  - Strike
  - Throwing
- Receiving
  - Catching
  - Stopping
  - Trapping
- Travelling with:
  - Dribbling (feet)
  - Dribbling (hands)
  - Dribbling (stick)
- Receiving and Sending
  - Striking (bat)
  - Striking (stick)

### Balance Movements

- Balancing/Centering
- Body Rolling
- Dodging
- Landing
- Spinning
- Stopping
- Stretching
- Twisting

Further information on age and stage of development in relation to FMS and physical literacy can be found in section 4 of the *About Active Play* book.

The delivery model with suggested activities and resources for the two age groups is summarised in the following diagrams.

During the first half of each session the play worker leads a warm up followed by games and activities focused on one movement skill suited to the age of the group.

6-12

Fundamental movement skills

BHF Active Club

3-6

Agility, balance and coordination

BHF Early Movers and Active Club

The second half of the session is all about the children playing their own games. The play worker should encourage and support play that includes the movement skill developed in the first half of the session.

Child led active games and play

**3-6 Session delivery guide**-to be repeated for the duration of the project with a variety of games introduced for each skill.

Session 1

Session 2

Session 3

Session 4

Session 5

Running games

Jumping games

Throwing/catching Games

Balance games

Stretching and body shape games

**6-12 Session delivery guide**-to be repeated for the duration of the project with a variety of games introduced for each skill.

Session 1

Session 2

Session 3

Session 4

Session 5

Running games

Jumping games

Send and receive games

Striking/ object control games

Balance and stretching games

More detailed Delivery Guides are provided in sections 11 and 12 of this document. Further information and guidance on the BHF resources is provided in section 10.

## 6. Progressions

When children are moving towards the older end of the Active Play spectrum (9-12 years) they should have developed basic FMS and be ready to progress onto the development of sport or activity specific skills. These skills will enable them to continue the development of their physical literacy beyond the play setting and continue to enjoy a range of physical, cognitive, social and emotional benefits.

This progression, from Active Play sessions to local sport or activity specific session, is an important element of the project. Learning from previous pilot work suggests that this work requires careful consideration in each location to make sure that the provision is a suitable progression from the Active Play setting. It should also continue to offer the children the type of experience required to accommodate and engage all of the group.

Each of the Active Play ventures will be provided with support to identify the most appropriate progression pathways and means by which to practically manage the process.

## 7. Setting and weather

The Active Play projects will be delivered in both school and community settings. In both settings, a variety of spaces should be used to encourage on going skill development and confidence in using different spaces for play. It is important children understand that fun active games can be created and played almost anywhere. A variety of surfaces and spaces increases the potential for the development of FMS and physical literacy as children have to respond to different conditions and move in slightly different ways.

For example, running on wet grass develops skill that is different from running on concrete or playing tig within a confined space is different to playing in a more open area.

Similar guidance applies to weather- where possible, Active Play should be delivered regardless of the weather to encourage the development of FMS and physical literacy.

For example, how does a wet ball skid along a surface compared to a dry one and how quickly can you stop running on a slippery surface?

It is important to encourage children to be willing and confident to play outside regardless of the weather- we live in Scotland after all!

The usual practical rules apply to safe play and the management of risk. We want children to learn through taking risks however we don't want them falling on broken glass or get ill through becoming too wet and cold.

## 8. Equipment

The equipment we use within an Active Play session can be an important part of certain activities however never has to be complicated or expensive. A huge range of games and activities can be played with the most basic of play equipment that almost or all play organisations will already have; many can be played with none at all.

A list of basic equipment that would be useful is listed below, however, a lot of fun can be had in using what is found in the place space, for instance a stick as a bat, or the old favourite jumpers for goal posts.

### Basic equipment list

- Bean bags
- Hula hoops
- Balls of varying size, weight, shape and texture
- Bats of varying size and shape
- Rope(s)
- Cones

The equipment and loose parts we provide can be a good way to encourage certain FMS in the first and second part of an Active Play session. By introducing different pieces of equipment, or limiting what is available we can lead an FMS focused game and encourage children to continue variations of this. For example, following a warm up game of tig, a coordination game focused on hitting a ball with a bat could be played in the first half of the session. A variety of balls and bats could then be provided in the second half of the session with the children being encouraged to create their own versions of the game.

## 9. The role of a play worker in Active Play sessions

Active Play should provide children with an opportunity to play in a safe and positive environment where they can learn, explore, develop and take risks. Play workers have an important role to play in creating this environment. They also have an important role to play in delivering the Active Play model as outlined.

Active Play should be all about fun, however there is the potential for children to have negative experiences. If these negative experiences are sufficiently traumatic and/or consistent they will turn children off from this type of activity with immediate impact on quality of life and potentially long term health and wellbeing. The play worker

therefore has a hugely important role in providing a positive experience for all children. Below is some guidance we hope will help you with this important role.

## **The play workers approach to the session**

As mentioned a few times, children attending Active Play session will be primarily engaged and motivated by fun. The approach of the play worker and the atmosphere they create is a significant factor in this with the first section of the session being led by the play worker. If the delivery of the session lacks energy and fun the children will quickly lose interest.

The best approach is simple and second nature to play staff; ensure there is energy, enthusiasm and enjoyment continually injected into the session through verbal encouragement and by taking part in games where appropriate. The more energy and enjoyment generated in the session by the play worker the greater the engagement of the children and impact on their development.

## **Fun, creativity and competition**

It is important that the Active Play setting doesn't change the nature of role of a play worker, they should remain true to the values of a play worker and at all times keep the sessions fun focused and child centered.

The sessions should be delivered creatively making best use of the physical environment, varying the activities and encouraging children to do the same.

There are very few rules in relation to the delivery of Active Play, however as a guide the sessions should be:

- Active;
- Fun;
- Simple;
- Inclusive;
- Creative and;
- Provide the opportunity for repetitive practise of the FMS.

Some games, a relay race for instance, are competitive by their nature. This can be challenging as competitive activity for children is often discouraged due to the potentially negative outcomes for some. It can also be difficult for play workers who are not familiar with competitive environments themselves.

Friendly competition can however be fun and a good experience for children; the vital point is that no value should be placed on winning and losing. Fun and inclusion must remain the driving factor for all activities.

There are three simple questions to ask to decide whether the competitive element of session is taking over the fun:

- 1) Is the competition element decreasing the fun and engagement for some?
- 2) Are some children are disengaging?
- 3) Is one or more person domination the activity?

If the answer to any of the above is 'yes' then use the STEPS model, outlined in the next section of this book, to alter the activity or intervene and change it to different activity all together.

The simple rule is keep it fun!

## **Difference between a play worker and a coach**

A play worker differs from a physical activity or sports coach by supporting, guiding and facilitating games and activity rather than dictating and instructing.

Although a play worker is not expected to provide guidance on the performance of any FMS in detail, there is plenty of resources and guidance available to build basic knowledge and confidence around the skills, what they look like and how they can be progressed.

The **sportscotland** website provides useful animations of FMS from early stages through to advanced fully developed skills that may assist play workers:

[www.sportscotland.org.uk/coaching/multiskills/introduction\\_to\\_multiskills](http://www.sportscotland.org.uk/coaching/multiskills/introduction_to_multiskills)

## **Delivery tips**

Play workers should consider a number of variables to ensure that the objectives above are being met and the session runs well- space, task, equipment, people and safety- often known as the STEPS model.

Examples of how to adjust the activity using the STEPs model are provided below.

### **Space**

- Increase/Decrease size of area
- Change shape of area
- Introduce different surfaces into the game

### **Task/Time**

- Increase or decrease time frames
- Vary task for more / less competent, older/ younger children
- Vary tasks for individual children's needs to engage all
- Use simple activities to embed principles of play, then progress with more advanced FMS where appropriate

## Equipment

- Increase/decrease and vary equipment
- Provide different sizes and hardness of balls Use a bigger smaller bat/ striking implement
- Encourage children to make up games with limited equipment

## People/Players

- More players / fewer players
- Mix ages and abilities

## Safety

- The safety element within a play setting depends on the nature of the play and environment but should not be overly conditioned to stop the children assessing risk and being able to learn.

## 10. Delivery Resources

As referenced throughout this book, the British Heart Foundation has produced a number of excellent resources to support the delivery of work similar to Active Play. As these resources haven't been specifically designed for Active Play they are not presented in line with the Active Play delivery model and may use slightly different terminology however they are an excellent source of activity ideas and additional information.

The Active Club pack, provided during the Active Play training session, is the resource best aligned with Active Play. The pack contains 119 activity cards providing a host of activity ideas suitable for children aged 4 to 14.

Many of the activity cards provide STEP suggestions to adapt the game to increase engagement and fun.

The activity cards don't specifically highlight which FMS are being developed so it is for the play workers to decide which activities they will use for each week. The cards should be used as a source of ideas and games which can be adapted in which every way suits the group, setting and equipment. There is no expectation that the cards will be followed exactly, or at all if play workers are confident designing their own games and activities.

In addition, the Active Club handbook provides further support and guidance around delivery and working with children. Further guidance on how to use The Active Club pack will be provided during the Active Play training session.

## 11. Delivery Guide (3-6 year olds)

Session	Theme	Game for session
1.	Running	
2.	Jumping	
3.	Throwing/ catching games	
4.	Balance	
5.	Stretching and body shape	
6.	Running	
7.	Jumping	
8.	Throwing/ catching games	
9.	Balance	
10.	Stretching and body shape	
11.	Running	
12.	Jumping	
13.	Throwing/ catching games	
14.	Balance	
15.	Stretching and body shape	
16.	Running	
17.	Jumping	
18.	Throwing/ catching games	
19.	Balance	
20.	Stretching and body shape	
21.	Running	
22.	Jumping	
23.	Throwing/ catching games	
24.	Balance	
25.	Stretching and body shape	
26.	Running	
27.	Jumping	
28.	Throwing/ catching games	
29.	Balance	
30.	Stretching and body shape	
31.	Running	
32.	Jumping	

## 12. Delivery Guide (6-12 year olds)

Session	Theme	Game for session
1.	Running	
2.	Jumping	
3.	Send and receive	
4.	Striking/ object control	
5.	Balance and stretching	
6.	Running	
7.	Jumping	
8.	Send and receive	
9.	Striking/ object control	
10.	Balance and stretching	
11.	Running	
12.	Jumping	
13.	Send and receive	
14.	Striking/ object control	
15.	Balance and stretching	
16.	Running	
17.	Jumping	
18.	Send and receive	
19.	Striking/ object control	
20.	Balance and stretching	
21.	Running	
22.	Jumping	
23.	Send and receive	
24.	Striking/ object control	
25.	Balance and stretching	
26.	Running	
27.	Jumping	
28.	Send and receive	
29.	Striking/ object control	
30.	Balance and stretching	
31.	Running	
32.	Jumping	

## 13. Evaluation

Evaluation is about demonstrating the impact of the project on the children and the changes that happen as a result of the project.

### What are the changes that we expect?

- We expect that children will improve their develop Fundamental Movement Skills
- We expect that children will increase their levels of physical activity
- We expect that children will progress into more active forms of play and into sport
- We also expect that play workers (and parents, and nursery and school staff) will understand the benefits of active play and develop skill to support Active Play.

We call these changes that we expect to happen the OUTCOMES.

The evaluation will gather evidence to demonstrate whether we have achieved these outcomes.

### How will we gather this evidence?

We have developed an evaluation plan and each of the four projects will be evaluated in the same way. There are three key players in the evaluation plan:

- Arrivo Consulting Ltd
- Strathclyde University
- The projects

We have also commissioned The University of Strathclyde to carry out a study of each of the four projects – the study will measure the extent to which children are developing Fundamental Movement Skills and the extent to which they are becoming more active.

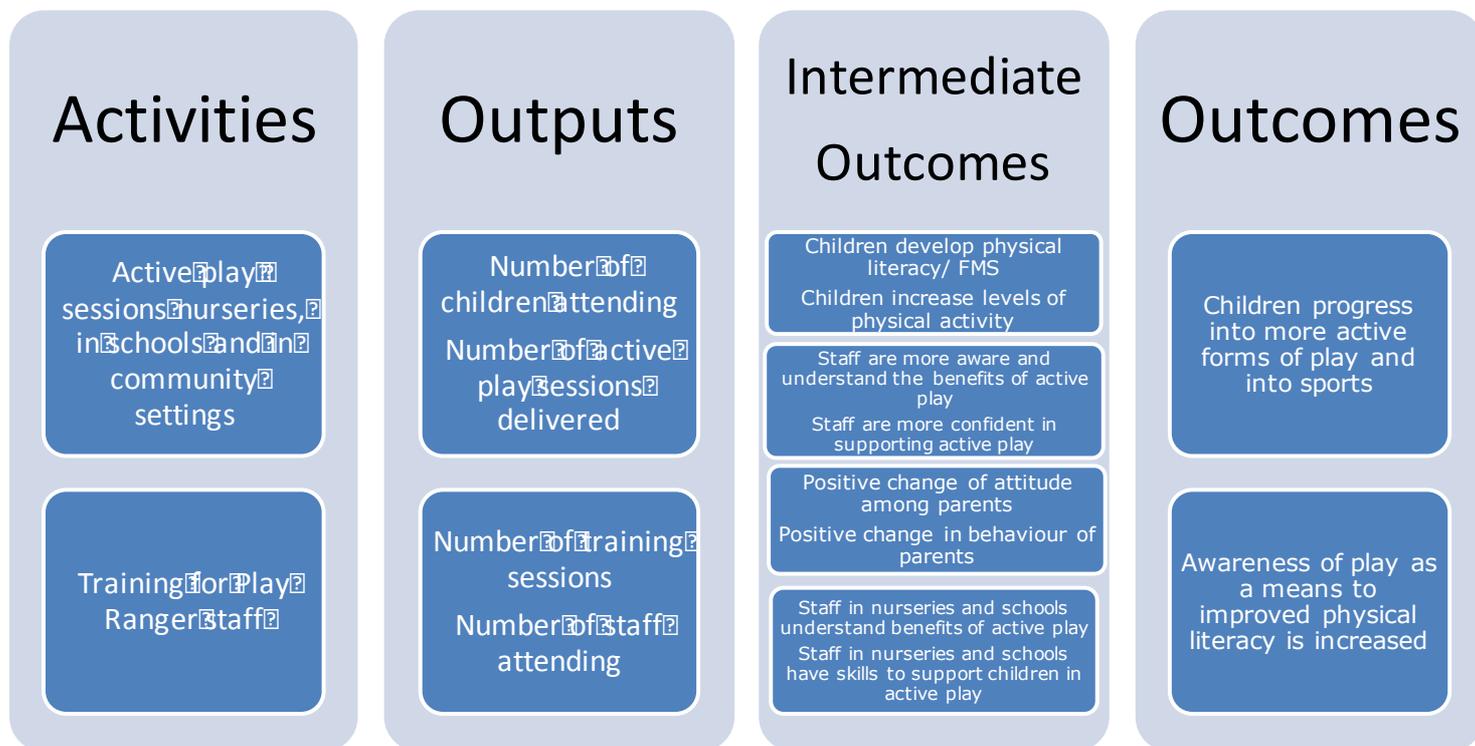
Each project will also collect its own evidence, based on observation of the children and through surveys and interviews with parents and nursery/school staff as appropriate.

We have commissioned Arrivo Consulting to oversee the evaluation.

- Arrivo Consulting will provide you with the tools and templates you will need to collect this evidence.
- You will also receive training and support to carry out your evaluation.

A copy of the Active Play LOGIC MODEL is below.

## Go2Play: Logic Model for Active Play



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**NOTES**