

Keep Youngsters involved

Good Practice Statements 14 Factors

The purpose of the project 'Keep Youngsters Involved' (KYI) is to answer the question: 'How do we keep youngsters involved and connected with sport and physical activity?' In many European countries we see that a lot of youngsters give up sport for many reasons, these are personal, social and environmental. This project targets youngsters (12-19 years) in general and specifically those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. It is funded by the European Commission, and is a collaborative partnership project in the Erasmus+ Sport programme (2016). The project runs from 1 January 2017 until 30 June 2019. For more information about the project, please visit www.keeptyoungstersinvolved.eu.

In work package 1 a rapid review of the literature was conducted to identify factors that prevent sports dropout in youngsters. Rapid reviews are a form of "knowledge synthesis in which components of the systematic review process are simplified or omitted to produce information in a timely manner"¹. A search syntax was developed and entered into the relevant databases, yielding 440 results. From these 440 studies, three systematic reviews were identified as the most suitable for gathering factors associated with preventing sports dropout²⁻⁴. Once the published literature search was complete, the KYI team gathered grey literature from the partner countries. Ten pieces of grey literature were identified and used to support and add to the published literature findings. In total, nearly 150 factors were found to be linked with sports dropout in youngsters. It was decided by the KYI team to focus on the factors that were known to **prevent** sports dropout. A description of each factor, along with our definition for sports dropout can be found below.

Sports Dropout Definition

The prolonged absence of systematic practice and competition, either in one sport (sport-specific dropout) or all sports (sport-general dropout).

Description of factors to prevent drop out of youngsters in sport

14 Factors

The Erasmus+ Sport project *Keep Youngsters Involved* developed Good Practice Statements to explain how factors found to be associated with the prevention of youth sports dropout could be implemented as part of the youth sport experience. Each statement will be accompanied by examples of strategies already in use by clubs across Europe to achieve this good practice.

1. Autonomy

Every youngster should experience a certain freedom of choice in his/her actions, thinking, and feeling related to his/her sports practice. Every youngster can take initiative and should experience their behaviour as self-organized.

2. Perceived competence / self-efficacy

Every youngster should feel confident about their ability to achieve a challenging sports-related task or predefined goal. Every youngster should believe that he/she is capable of performing a specific task or managing a challenging situation.

3. Relatedness

Every youngster should feel like he/she are part of the team/club. Every youngster should experience a sense of warmth, affection, acceptance and security about themselves, about being with others, and about being part of the team/club.

4. Learning climate

Every youngster should receive positive reinforcement from significant others (i.e. coaches, peers, parents) when he/she works hard and they should help others to learn through cooperation. It should be recognised that every person's contribution is important for the club.

5. Time/Goal Balance

Every youngster should manage their time, where possible, to allow for sports participation. Every club should organize activities at suitable, flexible and accessible times for youngsters to be able to participate. Clubs should balance time commitment required with youngsters' participation level (i.e. recreational, advanced or elite) and should be mindful of the time youngsters need to give to other aspects of their lives (e.g. education).

6. Cost

Every youngster should be able to afford the cost of staying involved in sport. Every club should actively try to keep the cost of participating low for youngsters in order to avoid financial barriers to participation. Every club should discuss opportunities for individuals facing financial barriers (e.g. membership in exchange for voluntary tasks at the sports club).

7. Expectancies

Every youngster should understand what to expect when participating in a sports club. These expectations should cover the physical, social and mental aspects of participation. Every club should understand how youngsters' expectations relating to participation differ depending on age, sex, culture and socio-economic status, and where possible cater for these variations in expectations and needs.

8. Values

Every youngster should value the importance and usefulness of sport participation for him/herself. Every club should value the importance of sport participation for youngsters and where possible should promote these values.

9. Coach-Athlete Relationship

Every youngster and coach should have an effective and positive relationship, which includes empathetic understanding, honesty, support, cooperation and respect⁵.

10. Peer-Involvement in Sport

Every youngster should be encouraged by other players and NOT be teased or made feel nervous in a negative sense when partaking in sport. Every club should provide opportunities for youngsters to interact and make friends and encourage youngsters to do so. This should be done formally (organised, planned, evaluated) and informally (unplanned).

11. Parental Autonomy Support

Every parent/guardian should encourage his/her youngster to participate in sport. Every parent/guardian should provide support (e.g. transport, equipment, doing activity with them, encouragement etc.), when possible, to their youngster to take part in sport. Every club should support parents/guardians to do so, especially with respect to youngsters who are more likely to drop out of sport (i.e. vulnerable groups).

12. Prevention Policy

Every club should have an anti-dropout policy that creates awareness of the factors associated with dropout and that actively strives to prevent dropout. Every clubs should be encouraged to use the health potential of their particular sport⁶. Every youngster should be an ambassador for participation and continued engagement in sport and physical activity.

13. Accessibility

Every youngster should be able to access the sports facilities safely and conveniently. Every club should make its facilities access as safe and convenient as possible for youngsters and their families.

14. Type of sport offer

Every youngster should have the possibility to participate in sports activities they enjoy and should be able to participate at the level they are most comfortable (e.g. competitive, recreational etc.). Every club should provide different opportunities for youngsters, where possible, and policies that create opportunities for youngsters with regard to level of participation, variation of training and organisation of competitions should be encouraged. To cater for a broad range of activities and meet the needs of families, every club should provide a wide range of sport activities if possible (i.e. multisport club).

For more information about the project, please visit www.keepyoungstersinvolved.eu.

References

1. Tricco, A. C., Antony, J., Zarin, W., Strifler, L., Ghassemi, M., Ivory, J., Perrier, L., Hutton, B., Moher, D. and & Straus, S. E. (2015). A scoping review of rapid review methods. *BMC medicine*, 13(1), 224.
2. Balish, S. M., McLaren, C., Rainham, D., & Blanchard, C. (2014). Correlates of youth sport attrition: A review and future directions. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 15(4), 429-439.
3. Crane, J., & Temple, V. (2015). A systematic review of dropout from organized sport among children and youth. *European physical education review*, 21(1), 114-131.
4. Temple, V. A., & Crane, J. R. (2016). A systematic review of drop out from organized soccer among children and adolescents. *Soccer & Society*, 17(6), 856-881.
5. Jowett, S. & Cockerill, I.M. (2003). Olympic medallists' perspective of the athlete-coach relationship. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 4, 313-331.
6. The Sports Clubs for Health (SCforH) approach. Available at <https://www.scforh.info/>