

After school activities: Another opportunity gap

FAST FACTS

- Professor Chris Mclroy has commented that extracurricular activities were fundamental in building confidence and resilience, but pupils from poorer backgrounds often missed out.
- Reform Scotland believes that after-school activities should be made available free of charge to all children in receipt of free school meals.
- Policies which can close the opportunity gap in terms of access to extracurricular activities could also help close the attainment gap and are therefore worth investigating.
- SportScotland works with local authorities to provide Active Schools activity programmes for school pupils.
- SportScotland believe that "Active Schools activities should be free to all children and young people locally"
- Reform Scotland's research has found that while some councils do offer free Active Schools activities, others charge for the activities.
- While it is up to each local authority to justify to its electorate what it charges for and what it doesn't, given that the activities are co-ordinated through a Scotland-wide organisation it does seem odd that there is a difference in charging practices.

CONTEXT

Reform Scotland believes that school pupils in receipt of free school meals (and pupils in P1-3 who would be in receipt of free meals without universal provision) should have access to local authority coordinated after-school activities free of charge.

Reform Scotland's aim was to look at council organised activities, which would be on offer to schools across the local authority area, as opposed to those organised by a group of parents or community group for one specific school.

We were aware that such activities had a cost in at least some local authorities, so in order to research potential costs of this policy carried out some initial research.

What we then discovered was that SportScotland works with councils to deliver Active Schools activities, which SportScotland believe should be free of charge to pupils. However, many local authorities charge.

While Reform Scotland does not object to councils doing things differently, as local politicians can answer to their local electorate for the decisions they make, this difference seemed surprising because the activities were delivered by councils in partnership with SportScotland, a Scotland-wide body.

BACKGROUND

Extracurricular activities are an important part of a child's development. It can help them socialise outside the classroom; learn and develop new skills; exercise; and generally help in the development of a well-rounded

individual. It may also highlight skills and aptitude an individual may have that may not have been discovered in the classroom.

A [Demos Study](#)¹ from June 2015 commented: *“The evidence suggests that character attributes not only reinforce academic learning but also have a significant positive influence on various later life outcomes, including those relating to health, wellbeing and careers. It also indicates that participation in non-formal learning activities – semistructured activities such as sport, drama and debating, which are primarily delivered outside the classroom – play a vital role in developing these attributes”*

Extracurricular activities may be organized by an individual school, a local authority, a sports club, a youth organization, a religious organisation, a social enterprise, a private company. The list is vast as are the different opportunities and choices available to young people. However, many activities can be very expensive, with parents having to pay for membership, classes or equipment.

Speaking at Reform Scotland’s education hustings and debate in April 2016, Chris McIlroy, a visiting professor of education at Strathclyde University and former chief inspector of schools, commented that extracurricular activities were fundamental in building confidence and resilience, but pupils from poorer backgrounds often missed out.²

A study by the NatCen and Newcastle University in England published in 2016³ indicated that

after school club attendance was associated with positive academic and social outcomes for disadvantaged children in particular.

Therefore, policies which can close the opportunity gap in terms of access to extracurricular activities could also help close the attainment gap and are worth investigating.

Active Schools

Active Schools is an initiative run by SportScotland, which works in partnership with all local authorities to support the Active Schools Network. It has been running since 2004 and is made up of over 400 managers and coordinators and works across all local authorities in Scotland.⁴ As a result it is the largest coordinated programme of extracurricular activities in Scotland.

The aim behind the programme is to provide school pupils with more opportunities to take part in sport and physical activities before school, during lunchtime, and after school, and as such should be welcomed.

Active Schools coordinators can work with a range of partners including local sports clubs and organisations to offer a range of activities.

Reform Scotland asked SportScotland about the average cost parents had to pay for their child to participate in Active Schools activities and what schemes it had in place to help children from disadvantaged backgrounds access the activities. SportScotland said:

¹Birdwell. J, Scott. R, Koninckx. D, “Learning by doing”, Demos June 2015

²Denholm. A, “Expert warns of return to the Victorian age for poor pupils”, Herald 18/4/16. Chris McIlroy’s presentation is available from Reform Scotland’s website [here](#).

³<http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/can-out-of->

[school-activities-close-the-education-gap.pdf](#)

⁴<http://www.sportscotland.org.uk/media/1783473/active-schools-booklet-new.pdf>

“sportscotland fund local authorities directly to deliver the outcomes of Active Schools. Active Schools activity should have no costs to parents”

Reform Scotland queried this response, highlighting as an example the [Edinburgh online booking site](#)⁵ for Active Schools activities, which all had a cost.

SportScotland responded saying:
“Active schools activities should be free to all children and young people locally. Whilst this is our policy and guidance some schools extend and widen their after school activity provision which can require a charge. This is a decision for local partners and schools.”

Reform Scotland is relaxed about different local authorities choosing different arrangements, as long as those choices are made clear to their electorate. However, we do believe that all children in receipt of free school meals should be able to access free Active Schools activities and that this could help towards narrowing the attainment gap. We therefore issued Freedom of Information requests to all local authorities to find out which charged parents. The results of that research are detailed in Table 1.

While the table highlights the variations between local authorities, we also found that there could be a variation in cost within local authorities. For example in Fife, the cost to parents for a primary school Active Schools football class varied between £6 and £18 per term. Similarly in Clackmananshire primary school football was free at Banchory Primary School, cost £4.50 at Alva Primary School and £9 at Craighbank Primary.

⁵ <https://www.ioininedinburgh.org/activity/9127/>

Dumfries & Galloway council provided an explanation of why costs may vary in its response:

“Active schools extra-curricular activities are delivered free of charge wherever this is practical or appropriate. Activities that are delivered through the Active Schools network that are delivered by a volunteer parent or by community club coach or leader are offered to parents at no costs. This is in line with the shared national principles.

“Charging for coaching only occurs when casual council community coaches are required to provide a wider range and breadth of activity as identified through schools or at the request of the young people.

“The cost to the parent will vary dependent on each school. In the majority of schools funding is provided by the Parent Council Association or budget allocated by the head teacher at the school to cover the associated costs of deploying a coach within a specific activity rather than passing the cost to the parent. The Active School and Community Sport staff will then look to sustain that particular programme beyond any initial 4 week block through the recruitment, retention and development of volunteer teachers, leaders or coaches. There are examples where parents will be charged approx. £1 to cover the cost of any such coach where funding or resource is not available for that particular activity or programme.”

This explanation could certainly apply in other cases, but is still something that parents should be made aware of.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Free after-school activities for all pupils entitled to free school meals

Evidence suggests that attendance in after school activities is associated with positive academic and social outcomes for disadvantaged children in particular.

As a result, Reform Scotland believes that the Scottish Government should consider using some of the budget it has created for closing the attainment gap to ensure disadvantaged pupils have access to free after-school activities. In activities that are oversubscribed, we would encourage councils to give priority to such individuals.

While the opportunity gap in terms of access to extracurricular activities can never be closed entirely, this small step could in turn help towards closing the attainment gap.

The Active Schools programme offers an easy way of delivering this policy. While it is up to local authorities to decide to justify their own charging scheme for the Active Schools activities, the fact that this scheme is coordinated through SportScotland would enable the Scottish Government to ensure all disadvantaged pupils could access extra-curricular activities free of charge.

Table 1: Freedom of Information responses⁶

Local Authority	Active Schools activities	Cost
Aberdeen City		
Aberdeenshire	Football; Table Tennis; Roller Skating; Judo; Jogging; Basketball; Tennis; Girls Football; Hockey; Running; Athletics; Multisports; Netball; Mini Volleyball; Dodgeball; Stay and Play; Zumba; Street Dance; Yoga; Skipping; Cricket; Badminton; Cross Country; Gymnastics; Rugby; Racquet Sports; Dance; Sooyang Do; Hip Hop; Cheerleading; Jazz Funk; Irish Dabcing; Boccia; Skiing; Bowling; Country Dancing.	Some activities are free while other range in price from £5 to £36 per term of £1 to £5 per session.
Angus	Athletics; Badminton; Basketball; Bowling; Cheerleading; Climbing; Country Dancing; Cricket; Cross Country; Curling; Cycling; Dance and Movement; Dodgeball; Football; Golf; Gymnastics; Highland Dance; Karate; Martial Arts; Mountain Biking; Netball; Rugby Union; Table Tennis; Taekwondo; Tennis; Volleyball.	All free of charge
Argyll and Bute	There are a number of activities available which are free of charge. The following have a cost to parents: Archery; Zone Club; Popercise; Trampolining; Girls Club; Football; Gymnastics; Football; Dance; Mini Mix; Mega Mix.	Some activities are free of charge. Those with a cost range from £10 to £22.50 per block.
Clackmannanshire	Basketball; Netball; Mini Olympics; Gymnastics; Badminton; Mini Ball Sports; Extreme Dodgeball; Tri-golf; Running; Bikeability; Dance; Tennis; Football; Touch Rugby; Multisports; Playground Games; Target Games; Ball Games; Volleyball; Rounders; Team Sports; Racquet Sports; Young Leaders; Mini-athletics; Hockey; Active Girls; No Girls Allowed.	Some activities are free; others have a block charge of between £2.25 and £18.
Dumfries and Galloway	American Football; Athletics; Badminton; Basketball; Baton Twirling; Billiards and Snooker; Boccia; Bowling; Breakfast Club; Cheerleading; Country Dancing; Cricket; Cross Country; Curling; Cycling; Dance and Movement; Disability Specific Activity; Dodgeball; Fit For Girls; Fitness; Football; Golf; Gymnastics; Handball; Hockey; Karate; Lacrosse; Miscellaneous Activity; Mountain Biking; Movement Skills; Multi Skills; Multisports; Netball; Personal Improvement Club; Pilates; Rowing; Rugby League; Rugby Union; Skipping; Squash; Swimming; Table Tennis; Tennis; Tri Golf; Ultimate Frisbee; Volleyball; Yoga.	See full explanation of costsings on page 4. Some are free while others have a cost.
Dundee City	American Football; Athletics; Badminton; Baseball; Basic Moves; Basketball; Bowling; Climbing; Cricket; Cycling; Dance and Movement; Fit For Girls; Fitness; Football; Games; Golf; Gymnastics; Handball; Hockey; Judo; Karate; Martial Arts; Modern Dance; Multisports; Netball; Parkour; Roller Skating; Rugby Union; Squash; Swimming; Table Tennis; Taekwondo; Tennis; Trampolining; Ultimate Frisbee; Walking; Water Polo; Yoga.	Many activities are free; some have a weekly charge between £1 - £2.50; and others have a block charge between £10-£25.
East Ayrshire	Football; Multi-sport; Girls Football; Badminton; Athletics; Cross Country; Dance; Hockey; Athletics; Outdoor Games; Rugby; Sports Leaders; Table Tennis; Volleyball; Boxing; Cycling; Daily Mile; i-Cycle; Karate; Walking group; Basketball; Active Girls; Futsal; Little Sport Stars; Fit For Girls; Fitness Suite; Health Activities; Judo; Breakfast club; Table Tennis; Disability Specific sports; Skipping; Cheer; Playground Games; Clubbercise.	Activities are free of charge.
East Dunbartonshire		"Our main aim is to support volunteer led sessions, with 86% of all sessions in 2015/16 being delivered by volunteer. If a deliverer is to be paid it is our policy to pay no more than £20 per hour, and a maximum of £1 per session. Schools can choose to charge more if

⁶ Please note that the activities listed are only Active Schools activities and won't necessarily cover all extra-curricular activities available to pupils in a school. In some of the responses we received a number of timetables covering different clusters. While every effort has been made to ensure all relevant activities are included, some may have been left out.

		they wish, but this would always be our recommendation in order to reduce funding as a barrier to participation.”
East Lothian	Athletics; Aqua fun; Basketball; Badminton; Cheerleading; Cricket; Cycling; Dodgeball; Football; Hockey; Jogging; Judo; Karate; Rugby; Gymnastics; Muay Thai fitness; Multi-sports; Netball; Table tennis; Tennis; Trampoline; Wakeboarding; Skipping; Surfing; Rock climbing.	Some activities are free, while others range in price from £6 to £21 per term. Surfing (£40) and wakeboarding (£90) have a higher fee.
East Renfrewshire	Volleyball; Rugby; Table Tennis; Football; Netball; Gymnastics; Hockey; Cricket; Badminton; Squash; Karate; Tennis; Cross Country, Girls Football; Mini Athletics; Cheerleading; Irish Dancing; Running; Dance; Trampoline; Archery; Cycling; Girls Rugby; Olympics; Fencing; Fitness; Swimming; Judo; Yoga; Skiing; Lacrosse; Dodgeball; American Sports; Young Leaders; Health & Wellbeing; Handball.	Some activities are free of charge, while others have a £1-£3 per week fee. A few activities have a block fee, up to £45 for ski-ing.
Edinburgh City	Dance; Judo; Trampoline; Basketball; Fencing; Football; Netball; Tennis; Volleyball; Athletics; Mini Kickers; Hockey; Hip Hop; Rugby; Gymnastics; Badminton; Taekwondo; American Football; Cheerleading; Multi-sports; Street Dance; Yoga; Cricket; Fitness; Table Tennis; Girls Football; Fun Sports; Breakdance; Karate; Musical Theatre; Running; Swimming.	Charges generally ranged from between £5 and £45 per term.
Eilean Siar	Mixed Sports; Football.	£1 per week.
Falkirk	Tennis; Badminton; Basketball; Dance; Multi-sports; Cricket; Lishi; Hockey; Football; Cross Country; Dodgeball; Cycling; Boxing; Golf; Table Tennis; Rugby Union; Tae Kwon Do; Trampoline; Basic Moves; Country Dance; Netball; Gymnastics	All free of charge.
Fife	Activity Clubs; Aerobics; American Football; Archery; Athletics; Badminton; Basic Moves; Basketball; Billiards and Snooker; Boccia; Bowling; Boxing; Breakfast Club; Cheerleading; Climbing; Cricket; Cross Country; Curling; Cycling; Dance and Movement; Disability Specific Activity; Dodgeball; Fencing; Fit For Girls; Fitness; Football; Fun Club; Games; Golf; Gymnastics; Handball; Health Related Activities; Healthy Living; Hockey; Judo; Karate; Kayaking; Modern Dance; Mountain Biking; Movement Skills; Multi Skills; Multi-sports; Netball; Rounders; Rugby League; Rugby Union; Shinty; Short Tennis; Swimming; Table Tennis; Tennis; TOP Club; Unihoc; Volleyball; Walking; Water Polo; Yoga	Costs range from £5 to £39 per term.
Glasgow City	Activity Clubs; Aerobics; American Football; Archery; Athletics; Badminton; Basketball; Boxing; Breakfast Club; Cheerleading; Club Golf; Country Dancing; Cricket; Cross Country; Curling; Cycling; Daily Physical Activity; Dance and Movement; Dodgeball; Fencing; Fitness; Football; Fun Club; Gaelic Football; Games; Golf; Gymnastics; Handball; Healthy Living; Hockey; Judo; Karate; Keepfit; Lacrosse; Martial Arts; Movement Skills; Multi Skills; Multi-sports; Netball; Orienteering; Outdoor Activities; Roller Skating; Rounders; Rugby League; Rugby Union; Short Tennis; Softball; Squash; Table Football; Table Tennis; Taekwondo; Team Building; Tennis; TOP Play; Unihoc; Volleyball; Walking; Weightlifting; Yoga	All free of charge
Highland	Shinty; Badminton; Football; Basketball; Soft Archery; Kids Club; Dance; Orienteering; Running; Multi Sports; Stay and Play; Fitness; Lunchtime club; Fitness; Athletics; Netball; Kayaking; Netball; Soccer 7's; Activ8 Dance; Rocketball (Pop Lacrosse); Futsal; Run Club; Cycle Club; Sports & Games Club; Short tennis; Table tennis; Hockey; Club Golf; Gymnastics; Indoor rowing; Cross County; Rugby; Activity Club; Junior Leaders Activity; Skipping; Exercise; Cycle Proficiency; Creative dance and movement; Ping Pong; Archery; Funky Friday Dance & Games; Dodgeball; Multiskills; Cheerleading; Games Club; Cycling Club; Fit Club; Fit Kids; Run, Jump, Throw; Bootcamp.	Most activities are free, while others have a cost of between 50p and £4 per week.
Inverclyde	Athletics; Basketball; Netball; Hockey; Rugby Union; Football; Girls Football; Multi-Skills; Dance; Play Makers; Tennis; Cricket	All free of charge

Midlothian	Hip Hop; Run, Jump, Throw; Basketball; Ball Games; Football; Street Dance; Hockey; Taekwondo; Judo; Athletics; Multisport; Badminton; Dance; Trampoline; Karate; Snow Sport.	Some are free of charge; others have a weekly fee of between £1 and £3. Judo is £4.50 per week and snow sports is £7.50 per week.
Moray (FOI denied as information online ⁷)	Basketball; Badminton; Jogging; Netball; fitness; couch to 5k; Dance; Hockey; Rugby; Table Tennis; Circuits; Football; Girls' Football; Bowls; Orienteering; Squash; Tennis; Mixed Sports; Trampoline; Athletics; Cheerleading; Cricket; Karate; Curling; Multisports; Dodgeball; Boccia; Street Dance; Running; EQ Sports Active; Touch Rugby Archery; Indoor Bowling.	Some activities are free of charge, some have a weekly fee, others cost around £20 per block, while others can cost up to £48 per term (EQ Sports Active under Keith ASG)
North Ayrshire	Swimming; Circuits; Sports; Girls Football; Football; Ball Skills; Rugby; Badminton; Athletics; Young Leaders; Country Dancing; Hip Hop; Basketball; Netball; Dance; Dodgeball; Gymnastics; Handball; Multisports; Roller Disco; Sportsmanship; Rounders; Squash; Running.	Nearly all activities are free of charge. A couple of football classes have a £1 charge.
North Lanarkshire	Football; Netball; Cross Country; Athletics; Handball; Dance; Rugby; Dogeball; Girls Fotball; Tennis; Primary Games; Basketball.	
Orkney Islands	Netball; Football; Badminton; Multi-activity; Dance; Gymnastics; Athletics.	Most are free of charge, while some activities have a cost of between 50p and £1.50 per session.
Perth & Kinross		
Renfrewshire	Running; Dance; Play Club; Basketball; Hockey; Football; Multi-sports; Street Dance; Athletics; Karate; Rugby; Badminton; Cheerleading; Dodgeball; Tennis; Netball; Judo; Benchball; Gymnastics; Fitness; Mini-bounce; Girls Football, Boccia, Olympic Stars, Archery; Taekwondo; Playground Games.	A number of activities are free of charge, some have a cost per session of between 50p to £1. Karate can cost £3.
Scottish Borders	Athletics; Badminton; Basketball; Boxing and Fitness; Boxing; Country Dancing; Cricket; Cycling; Dance; Dynamic Movement Skills; Fencing; Fitness; Floorball; Football; Girls football; Gymnastics; Hockey; Karate; Mini Olympics; Multisports; Netball; Rugby; Tennis; Run Jump Throw; Running; Zumba.	Many activities are free of charge while others have a weekly fee of between £1 and £6.
Shetland Islands	Athletics; Badminton; Dance; Football; Hockey; Multi Sports; Netball; Cycling; Dodgeball; Fencing; Fitness Activities; Rugby; Swimming; Taekwondo; Zumba; Cheerleading; Carpet Bowling; Cricket; Table Tennis; Olympians; Trampoline; Zumba.	Most activities are free of charge, but some have a weekly cost of between £1 and £3.
South Ayrshire	Handball; Badminton; Tennis; Gymnastics; Football; Girls Football; Dance; Jump Rope; Aerobics; Basketball; Running; Street Game; Mini Athletics; Multi Sports; Netball; Jogging; Athletics; Ball Skills; Dodgeball; Fun Fitness; Martial Arts; Rugby; Archery; Net Games; Fun Games; Table Tennis.	All free of charge apart from a gymnastics class and a street games class at £1 per session.
South Lanarkshire	Athletics; Badminton; Ball skills; Basketball; Benchball; Bike Safety; Breakfast Activity/Multi Sports; Cheerleading; Cook and Play; Cricket; Cross Country; Dance; Dodgeball; Duathlon; Energizer Activity Multi Sports; Fitness; Football; Girl's Football; Golf; Gymnastics; Handball; Health Families; Highland Dancing; Hockey; Infant Activity; Infant pack; Jog Scotland Activity; Judo; Karate; Morning Energizer; Muliti-Sports; Netball; Rugby; Run, Jump and Throw; Running; Scottish Dance; Skateboard; Skipping; Sports Leaders Training; Stay and Play; Table Tennis; Taekwondo; Tennis; Walking; Yoga.	Majority are free of charge, though a few classes have a cost of between 50p and £2.50 per session.
Stirling	Multi Sports; Netball; Football; Bouldering; Fitness; Cross Country; Lacrosse; Country Dancing; Think Dance; Basketball; Cricket; Girls Rugby; Girls Football; Running; Badminton; Volleyball; Squash; Table Tennis; Athletics.	Most classes are free of charge, though some have a cot of between £1 and £3

⁷ We have tried to summarise the information for Moray based on what was available online: <http://sportinmoray.co.uk/mcsh/active-schools/active-schools-moray/elgin-academy-asg/2/>

		per session.
West Dunbartonshire	Athletics; Basketball; Football; Mini-movers; Badminton; Boccia; Circuits; Cricket; Cross-Country; Dance; Dodgeball; Fitness; Zumba; Gaelic Football; Hockey; JogScotland; Infant Multi-Skills; Netball; Rugby; Running; Table Tennis; Tennis	Most classes are free of charge, while some have a cost of £1 per session.
West Lothian	Handball; Football; Basketball; Dance; Multisports; Netball; Athletics; Badminton; Volleyball; Games; Orienteering; Cheerleading; Dance; Rugby; Hockey; Fencing; Fitness; Gymnastics; Table Tennis; Yoga; Cycling; Bowling; Shinty; Golf; Cross Country; Volleyball.	<i>"We are advised by our Active Schools Team that a maximum of £2 per pupil per session is charged, this is purely to cover the cost of coaching staff. Some coaching staff do activities on a voluntary basis so there would be no charge to parents in some instances."</i>