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The Impact of Place on Young People's Participation in Sport and Physical Activity in The North East of England

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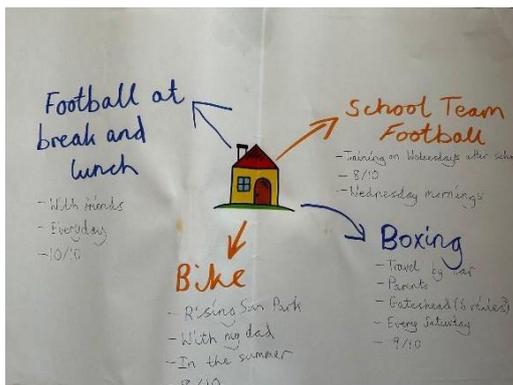# The Impact of Place on Young People's Participation in Sport and Physical Activity in The North East of England

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<u>Acknowledgments</u>

<u>Abstract</u>

The present research study aims to explore the impact of place on young people's participation in sport and physical activity in the North East of England. At the beginning of this research study there were limited findings into young people's perception of place and how this can affect health related behaviors, including their participation in sport and physical activity. The benefits of sport and physical activity are widely acknowledged across the literature. Thus, this project aims to explore the potential influences on young people's engagement with sport and physical activity to better understand current barriers and facilitators and the role of place specifically. Qualitative research methods, including focus groups and interviews, were conducted with young people aged 11 to 14 and adults who are employed in the area of Wallsend. Once data collection was complete, a reflexive thematic analysis was carried out to identify key themes. These included, (1) Experience of The Local Area, (2), Sport and Physical Activity in The Local Area and (3) Influences on Participation in Sport and Physical Activity in The Local Area. It was found that the young people in the study would like to participate more in sport and physical activity. However, there are certain restrictions in relation to where they live, as well as how their family can support their engagement. The main barriers to participation in Wallsend for the young people in the study are the lack of safety and maintenance of outdoor spaces in the community and also the lack of accessible activities on offer for their age group. However, the participants did highlight the positive impact that their family and friends can have on their participation.

Chapter One: Introduction

Place

The following study aims to explore the impact of place on young people's participation in sport and physical activity. Focusing specifically on the area of Wallsend, a town in North Tyneside, Tyne and Wear, England. As current statistics show, less than half (47%) of young people are meeting the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines of 60 active minutes of sport or physical activity per day(Sport England, 2023) , and this present study aims to address, and raise awareness of the influences on young people's 's participation and how certain barriers may be addressed. In the longer term, the findings aim to increase participation rates amongst young people and inform sports policy in the North East of England and wider communities. To achieve this, the findings will be shared within educational and sporting stakeholders in the area of Wallsend. To research and understand place to its full extent, it is important to understand what it represents and the ability it has to impact people's lives. For example, Little (2020), argued that we should recognise the difference between 'place' and 'space'. Space being the physical environment and its dimensional structure, whereas place also encapsulates the social and cultural meanings of a space (Parsaee et al., 2015). As Ujang and Zakariya (2015) suggested, 'place is a manifestation of human culture' (p.711) which can influence people's attitudes and behaviours. For example, 'places are practiced. People do things in place; what `they do, in part, is responsible for the meanings that a place might have' (Cresswell, 2009: p.2). Thus, it is beneficial to listen to local people, to explore the activities they do and how they feel about the place they live. This place-based study will aim to understand local young people's perception of Wallsend and the physical activities they participate and engage with in the area.

Predominantly, place-based research has explored people's quality of life (Hashemnezhad et al., 2013; McGowan et al., 2021), and such research has aimed to tackle poverty and inequalities within deprived communities (Mcbride, 2018). There have been several studies which have assessed young people's relationship with the urban environment, most of which

have centered on 'young people's perceptions and experiences of their local environment and their participatory role in planning and decision making of environmental projects' (Travlou, 2003: p.3). Research can give young people a sense of agency, to feel more accepted and listened to within their communities. This can also allow for a deeper insight into their perspective and potentially a better understanding of things that need to be changed to enforce positive development. As Hadfield-Hill (2013) suggests, young people 'are part of the present system; they are part of households, families, friendships network, consumers, and communities. Therefore, it is necessary to examine their knowledge, actions and desires regarding their local and global environments' (p.355).

In addition, 'youth engagement in placemaking ensures the creation of more inclusive places' (Little, 2020: p.8). Empowering young people can create feelings of acceptance 'and a reality of engaged citizens for the future and provides a more comprehensive perspective of placemaking by giving a voice to the historically underrepresented group' (Little, 2020: p.8). In 1999 Matthews and Limb commented on the lack of research surrounding young people within the socio-geographical context. Their voices have particularly not been present in the literature considering the impact of the spaces in which young people spend most of their time. Matthew and Limb refer to this as, the "fourth environment" which encompasses home, school, and the playground. However, in 2005 Schulz et al suggested that there is a growing interest among researchers, policymakers, practitioners and community stakeholders to increase the awareness of people's experience of health and place. This interest was brought on by health disparities, health variations across geographic units (Macintye et al., 2002) and the relationship between the built environment and people's health (Jackson, 2003). Aronson et al (2007) also argued that there has been an increased emphasis on place-based interventions. This highlights the value of place and why it is important to consider place-based interventions particularly among young people in the community.

To highlight what has already been researched previously, and how the present study aims to add to the literature within the field, a study in 2000 conducted by Morrow, explored young people's perceptions of their community and neighbourhood, and the implications this may have on health inequalities. They state that there has been a large amount of epidemiological attention on the relationship between material inequalities seen during childhood and people's health inequalities experienced in adulthood. They argue that other studies have not

'explained why, or how, deprivation in childhood is linked to poor health outcomes in later life' (Morrow, 2000: p.141). This research was also conducted over 20 years ago, and so updated findings need to be explored and analysed. McKenzie (2016) also noted the value in analysing the amount, type, place and context of sport and physical activity to understand the potential barriers and facilitators that people in the community are facing. This is because, 'detailed assessment will provide a better understanding of where, when and how much activity is or is not occurring' (p.334), which may also allow for an increase in the effectiveness of interventions and improvement of facilities in an area. To adopt a place-based approach will further enable an assessment of people in specific locations, taking into consideration their individual characteristics and lifestyle with the aim of improving public health surveillance and benefitting practitioners in their design of future PA spaces and programmes (McKenzie, 2016). The area in which a young person grows up heavily dictates their interaction with people and the activities they engage with on a regular basis. For example, the physical make-up of a place such as the positioning of houses, schools and pavements can influence health and wellbeing (Committee on Environmental Health, 2009). This finding has also been supported by Collins and Kay (2014) who stated that those living in poverty are much more limited in terms of their life choices and amount of leisure opportunities. Money is the most significant barrier hindering children's access to travel and participation in sport (Collins and Kay, 2014). For instance, young people from low-income families are less likely to be members of sports clubs, to compete in sport or be coached (Sport England, 2009).

National Policy and Place-Based Approaches to Physical Activity

Sport England's (SE) policy, 'Uniting the Movement' is a 10-year strategy (Sport England, 2021), from 2021 to 2031 and beyond, with the vision to move towards a place-based approach. It aims to positively change people's lives and communities through the power of sport and physical activity. At the root of their mission is to make sport and physical activity more accessible and a "level playing field" for everyone. People's participation is currently disproportionally affected by their background, gender, bank balance and postcode area. Therefore, SE will work alongside and invest further into national governing bodies, local sports clubs, organisations and community groups to increase the participation rates of those who are least active and not meeting government guidelines. They believe that sport has the ability to 'develop confidence and self-worth and help create more resilient, inclusive and

connected neighbourhoods'. It can also 'grow the local economy, provide jobs and purpose, integrate different groups, help tackle antisocial behaviour, respond to the threat of climate change and save public expenditure' (p.20). Through a bottom-up approach they will work with communities to help those affected most and improve what is currently available in their neighbourhood. Specifically, as part of the policy action plan, they will invest in community organisations including local existing and successful local sports clubs and charities, who have a good understanding of the area, as well as helping those in need who do not have organisations currently established. This way they will collaborate on local solutions 'and not default to top-down national programmes' (p.23). Furthermore, SE aim to expand their place-based work by communicating with more places and the local decision makers, regarding local priorities and partnership opportunities.

Moreover, in December 2017 Sport England announced they were investing in 12 local delivery pilots to help local communities and partners develop sport and physical activity within their area. The pilot aim to become knowledgeable about each area, understanding its specific needs, current barriers and the inequalities local people are facing so that ultimately, they can provide help and increase activity levels. Approximately £100 million of National Lottery money will be invested into these projects to work directly with their pilot communities, building trust to operate a better future. Within this initiative, SE will work across locations including rural places, small towns, coastal communities and big cities. Since the beginning of their work with the 12 pilots, SE have provided regular updates on the progress being made (Sport England, 2022; 2024). For example, they have evaluated how the pilots have built up a strong partnership and credibility within the places, by engaging with the reality of local people's daily lives. This way they have become more aware of the 'local system', how it works and the benefits and challenges it faces. In summary, the shift SE have made towards a place-based approach emphasises the importance of place and the impact it can have.

To ensure good delivery of a place-based legacy for local people in November 2021 Sport England (SE) introduced the Commonwealth Active Communities (CAC) fund. The fund aimed to improve facilities and increase access to community sport across the West Midlands, acting as a legacy of the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. At the center of the fund are physical spaces and places which allow and encourage people to be active including streets, parks and waterways connecting local communities, as well as

networks, organisations and leaders working together to improve participation rates through policy and strategy changes to sustain the quality of approaches into the future. In addition to the CAC fund, there is also the 'Places and Spaces' fund, which is dedicated to improving sport in local areas, donating awards of up to £10,00 from National Lottery funding. Much investment is spent on areas of high deprivation and communities who have been impact the most by the Covid-19 epidemic.

This study will aim to further raise the awareness of place and the influence it can have on local people's participation in sport and physical activity through focus groups and interviews with young people and adults in the community.

Physical Activity and Young People

The benefits of physical activity on young people has been widely researched and proven topic within the literature. Participating in a sufficient amount of physical activity can allow young people to live healthier lives, both physically and psychologically (Timmons et al., 2007). Piggin (2020) have defined physical activity as "people moving, acting and performing with in culturally specific spaces and contexts, and influenced by a unique array of interests, emotions, ideas, instructions and relationships" (p.1). Exercise has been described as 'planned, structured, repetitive and purposeful in the sense of improvement or maintenance of one or more components when physical fitness is the objective (World Health Organisation, 2019), whereas sport involves a competitive element 'undertaken in the context of rules defined by an international regulatory agency' (Bouchard et al., 2012: p.38). It is important to understand what classifies as physical activity and sport, so appropriate interventions can be put in place and adequate levels of intensity are met.

As Farooq et al (2020) recently stated, participation in moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity (MVPA) is positively associated with lifelong health benefits. The study highlights the importance of MVPA in relation to adolescent obesity prevention, recognising the current decline in young people's physical activity levels, especially during early to mid-childhood. It is important that young people are meeting recommended guidelines, as higher levels of aerobic fitness have also been associated with the reduction of cardiovascular

diseases, as well as diabetes within their age bracket (Resalund et al., 2010), better motor skill development (Fisher et al., 2005) and a healthier body composition (Moore et al., 2003). Equally, although most attention has been paid to the physical health benefits of physical activity, from the early 2000's there has been a growing body of research suggesting that physical activity is an effective preventative treatment for anxiety and depression (Mutrie, 2000) and psychological benefits are related to sufficient physical activity in young people, such as improving overall general wellbeing (Carter and Michelo, 2012).

Research into the physical, mental and social benefits of physical activity also allows for an increase in awareness and education regarding the importance of participation and it is necessary that this information is communicated effectively throughout communities. Local institutions and employees should be made aware of current physical activity levels within their area and what specifically needs to be improved to ensure guidelines are met. Consequently, this present study aims to recognize the impact of place, and the influence different factors have upon young people's engagement in sport and physical activity in the local area of Wallsend, so appropriate decisions can be made within this area and beyond. It is currently recommended that young people in the UK should participate in an average of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity (MVPA) a day (Department of Health and Social Care, 2019), spending as little time as possible sedentary (Department of Health and Social Care, 2019). Evidence shows that just two to three hours of MVPA per week can have lasting benefits on young people (Janssen and LeBlanc, 2010). These government guidelines are consistent with recommendations globally (World Health Organisation, 2020). It is important that these guidelines are met as there is a recuring trend of decline during the transition of childhood to adolescence (Nadar et al., 2008). This study aims to provide in-depth data surrounding the influence of place, specifically Wallsend, on young people's participation in sport and physical activity, to increase the number of young people meeting the governments recommended guidelines for physical activity levels. Current physical activity data shows the groups which need to be most targeted and what needs to be improved specifically within individual communities. Prevalence data in 2019 showed that just 18% of young people were meeting the recommended guidelines, 60 minutes of MVPA per day (nhs.uk, 2019). From this, it was identified that boys (20%) were more likely to be active than girls (14%), which also highlights the difference in gender. Further research supports these findings. Cooper et al (2015) also expressed that an estimated

80% of teenagers are not participating in enough physical activity. Most recently, from the 2017/18 academic year to the 2022/23 academic year, there has been a 7% decrease in activity levels among year 9 to 11 secondary school pupils (Active Lives, Sport England, 2023).

To highlight trends throughout the 2021/22 academic year, Sport England's Active Lives Children and Young People Survey (Sport England, 2024), also provides a detailed representation of current activity in the different age groups. For example, among those aged 5-16, research shows that 47.2% are 'active', achieving 60 minutes of MVPA per day, 22.7% are 'fairly active', engaging with 30-60 minutes of MVPA on average per day and 30.1% are categorised as 'less active', participating in less than 30 minutes of MVPA on average per day. This research highlights the decline in participation throughout childhood and into adolescence. Examples of current barriers to physical activity participation that young people are facing include 'extended time on digital screens, hectic daily schedules, extra academic pressure, not having enough space for playing or jogging, and laziness' (Khan et al., 2022: p.5). Female participants in this study also felt that they had fewer options and opportunity to play sport, than their male counterparts, as well as experiencing a lack of family support and were discouraged by their culture (Khan et al., 2022). This present study also aims to further understand the current influences on young people's sport and physical activity in Wallsend, and how specific barriers can be reduced. As Tannehill et al (2015) have argued, listening to the voices of young people regarding why they choose to participate in sport and physical activity may help to acknowledge and address PA environments to make them more inviting.

<u>Engagement in Physical Education</u>

Physical Education lessons incorporate both indoor and outdoor physical activities for students within the school context (Wiium, 2021) and therefore contribute to many young people's sport and physical activity participation levels. School sport also gives young people the opportunity to try different types of sport and physical activities which is advocated in order to develop further interest outside of school (Department for Education, 2023). Understanding young people's engagement and impact on their enjoyment of physical education can help to inform future policy and the breakdown of barriers to allowing increased participation in and out of the school environment. For example, Beni et al (2017)

concluded, in their review of 50 individual studies, there a number of factors influencing young people's meaningful experience of physical education and youth sport, such as sex/gender and family background. Their study has also highlighted the importance of social interaction, fun and the ability to be challenged in young people's experience of physical education. However, physical education can also exacerbate gender norms and reinforce stereotypes relating to masculinity and femininity (Mennesson et al., 2017). As argued by Wright and Laverty (2010) the expectation of gender permeate young people's experiences of both physical education and physical activity outside of the school environment, which can emphasize opportunities or constraints for young people's level of physical activity. The role of gender can also help to explain the difference in sport and physical activity outside of school, where initiatives need to put be put into place and who for. In Metcalfe's (2018) study they concluded that young male participants viewed sport as an important factor in their sense of identity and self-worth, whereas young females considered sport as 'akin to an ability, something they could do, rather than something integral to their sense of self' (p.687). Greater understanding of young people's experience of physical education in this study may help to inform the types of sport and physical activity on offer in the community and what aspects of sport and physical activity young people would like to engage more with in the local area. As stated by Metcalfe (2018) 'experiences of physical education or sport should not be researched in isolation from other field and contexts in which young people find themselves' (p.683). However, previous research has often ignored the complexity of young people's lives and the interconnection of different social fields (Wright and Macdonald, 2010). As Dagkas and Quarmby (2015) suggest, different areas of people's lives including family, schooling and peer culture contribute to a person's perception of sport and physical activity.

Impacts of Gender on Physical Activity Participation

It typically known that young males engage in more sport and physical activity than young females (Sport England, 2018). Therefore, understanding how gender impacts participation levels can help to inform the type of activity delivered to young people both in and outside of the school environment. Previous research conducted by Metcalfe and Lindsey (2020) has explored young people's perspective of the gendered nature of sport, physical activity and physical education participation. Their findings highlighted the different perception and levels of enthusiasm for sport, physical activity and physical education between young men

and women. For example, they argued that sport, for many of their male participants was viewed as 'synonymous with the successful representation of masculinity' (Metcalfe and Lindsey, 2020: p.542). However, the young women did not regard sport as a priority rather something they could do but that was largely an optional extra in their lives. Their findings also showed the difference in preference of type of activity: 'young men typically valued competitive team sports in contrast to gym/fitness activities for young women' (Metcalfe and Lindsey, 2020: p.534). Rosselli et al (2020) have also found that girls perceive more barriers to sport and physical activity in adolescence than their male counterparts and recommend that girls must be carefully considered in future prevention programs.

Wallsend as a Research Site

To provide context around the present research project, and to understand the perspectives of the participants, it is important to highlight where the research took place. The area of Wallsend is located in North Tyneside in the Northeast of England. Prior to conducting any research, I initially walked around Wallsend exploring the different areas and spaces accessible for young people to participate in sport and physical activity. I tried to understand Wallsend as a place before undertaking any research to provide context when listening to the participants' observations. Statistics in 2022 show that Wallsend's population is estimated to be 10,923 people in total with 88.3% of people identifying as White, British. In 2019 showed that of 11,515 people living in Wallsend 4,860 lived in a neighbourhood that was in the 10% most deprived in England (North Tyneside Council, n.d)

Terminology

Throughout the thesis the terms 'sport', 'physical activity' and 'physical education' are used to describe the young peoples different forms of exercise. Specifically, 'sport' is used in relation to organized sporting activities both in and out of the school environment. Whereas, the term 'physical activity' is used when referring to other forms of exercise including informal activity and play. When activities can not be classified in either category as 'sport' or 'physical activity' the phrase 'sport and physical activity' will be used. Moreover, the term 'physical education' is used when discussing the young peoples participation of sport and physical activity inside the school environment as part of the national curriculum. As highlighted by Kirk et al (2006) the term physical education is not synonymous with sport and physical activity as they do not hold the same purpose or goal.

The term 'young people' is used to refer to the participants used in the study who are all in secondary school.

Aims of the study

1. To understand the impact of place on a young person's engagement with physical activity and sport
2. To explore the types of physical activity and sport in which young people participate, in relation to place and the physical environment
3. To explore the influence of gender stereotypes on a young person's local engagement with physical activity and sport

The present study will address each aim through qualitative research methods including focus groups and interviews. Specifically, the findings aim to evaluate the current perspectives of young people in Wallsend in relation to the place in which they live, and how this affects their participation in sport and physical activity. The role of gender will be considered throughout the study.

The findings of the study intend to inform future sport policy, increase young peoples participation rates in Wallsend and other areas by drawing attention to the current influences on their participation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review chapter will address the following two themes. Firstly, the influence of place in relation to its physical and social environment, and specifically how these spaces interact with and affect young people's lives and participation in sport and physical activity. Following this previous and current trends regarding young people's participation of sport and physical activity will be analysed to understand the key areas for improvement with regards to how much they are participating, where they are participating and what is influencing their engagement . Young people's engagement in physical education within school will also be discussed with the consideration of gender norms and how this can affect participation in sport and physical activity in the community.

The Influence of Place

Place can be very influential on people's lives in many ways. As Goodchild (2015) has suggested, place can heavily impact health related behaviours. The idea of place within the literature has typically been associated with ideas of community, collective memory, group and individual identity, political organisation and capital flows (Easthope, 2004). It is a social construct; places are what people make them to be and so our idea of places 'are products of the society in which we live' (Massey, 1995: p.50). Many people have rich associations with places, for example, we perceive different parts of the environment in terms of named places (Goodchild, 2015) which can create a 'sense of place', a theme which has been well researched in the literature. Azaryahu and Foote (2009) state that a sense of place refers to the type of emotions and attachment people develop and relate to different environments. This may be at national, regional or local level. To provide a definition, Cresswell (2009) stated that it 'refers to the more nebulous meanings associated with place: the feelings and emotions a place evokes'. Moreover, a study previously conducted in 2005 by Manzo evaluated the multiple dimensions of place and its meaning. Research has commonly focused on people's positive relationships with place (Manzo, 2005) and thus negative feelings and experiences connected with place are less known about. Findings from this study highlight a wide range of emotions towards place and so it is important to explore people's perspectives

form different backgrounds ensuring those who may need more support in communities are listened to.

Despite being over 20 years old, Morrow's (2000) study offers valuable findings into the concept of social capital and how this relates to the health and well-being of children. The study was conducted in two comprehensive secondary schools in Springfield, America. They set out the objective to understand people's attitudes towards institutions and facilities in the local community. Specifically, the types of physical spaces, including parks, leisure centres and clubs which are most used by young people. They also investigated the engagement of young people, questioning, 'to what extent do they feel they have a say in community and institutional decision-making?' (Morrow, 2000: p.142). Multiple qualitative methods were used to collect data surrounding young people's experience of their neighbourhoods, their everyday lived experience, quality of life and social surroundings. This study has provided the opportunity to gain 'young people's view on the social world' so as to enable their voices to be heard (Morrow, 2000: p.149) in relation to networks within the local community. Their findings revealed that young people are often disapproved of and spend a lot of time in "trampyplaces", which highlights the inequality 'by the virtue of their age' (Morrow, 2000: p.151).

Morrow (2000) also goes on to investigate the attitudes towards institutions and facilities in the community, including the types of physical spaces such as parks, streets, leisure centres and clubs used for social interaction which are accessible and used by young people in the community. In addition, the extent to which young people engage in community-based activities and whether they feel listened to regarding local and institutional decision-making. Morrow used multiple qualitative research methods to explore these points and further understand children's overall subjective experience of their neighbourhoods, quality of life and the nature of their social networks. Morrow argues that to allow for young people's perspectives and opinions in policy debates surrounding public health, it is first important to understand their sense of belonging, so they began by investigating how participants perceive the place they live. There were a range of responses depending on gender, ethnicity and age. Many girls focused on the feeling of safety, with one 13-year- old stating that "I don't feel safe where I live" (Morrow, 2000: p.144). Another female participant also described the area as "trampy". A 12-year-old boy argued that he did not like his area because "it's so built up

and there's not much to do… where my sister lives, she lives in another town and just across the road there's a big forest, and my brother likes to go over there with their dog, and they'd be out for hours and hours, and that's what I like when I go there" (Morrow, 2000: p.144). This highlights the lack of facilities and green spaces available for those local people in their area which might suggest that they would have to travel out of their community to participate in sport or physical activity. One of the main themes which emerged was the way young people felt 'mistrusted and not respected by the adults around them' (Morrow, 2000: p.146). In summary, this study brought attention to young people's perspectives in relation to their view of the social world as well as their neighbourhoods and networks, which 'differs from adult-oriented preoccupations about this age group' (Morrow, 2000: p.149).Kelso (2021) has also, more recently, stated that to understand young people's participation levels in physical activity and sedentary behaviours, various factors including place must be considered.

Bartholomew et al (2016) highlights, people's health related behaviours are a product of the individual and the environment in which they live and social and physical structures can enable or hinder physical activity participation levels (Kelso et al., 2021). For example, 'the physical layout of communities can promote or limit opportunities for physical activity' (Committee on Environmental Health: p.1592). Places which encourage and promote activity among children and adolescents are more likely to achieve the government's recommended guidelines for physical activity (Committee on Environmental Health, 2009).

In reviewing previous literature and its analysis of place, there is a need for more research into young people's sense of place and how they interact with their local environment. As found, there is limited known about young people's attachment to a place and how their sense of place develops, which can have an impact on young people's health, wellbeing and identity (Grimshaw and Mates, 2022). There is also a need for a wider exploration into the barriers and facilitators of a place to understand how young people can benefit from their local surroundings and community. Moreover, the majority of research which was analysed is not up to date and therefore does not reflect the current state of affairs with regards the impact of place on young people . To promote development and policy implementation this study will aim to provide a current insight into young people's experiences and perspectives and the relationship they have with Wallsend. The physical and social dimensions of place will now

be reviewed.

The Physical Environment

The physical environment includes many different factors which can influence young people's development and how they feel and interact with their local community. Therefore, it is important to understand the factors which may affect children's development and the role of the physical environment on their lives. To provide context, Ferguson et al (2013) have reviewed the effect of toxins, noise, crowding, chaos, housing quality, school and childcare quality and neighbourhood quality to understand the cognitive and socioemotional development of children and adolescents. For example, children subject to poverty and substandard housing are more likely to experience residential mobility. This can create less stability in their lives and ultimately decrease their sense of attachment and comfortability within a place. Bures (2003) also found that more household moves during childhood were associated with poorer mental health and less stable social relationships, independent of race, income or education.

The make-up of the physical environment also plays a significant role in the different types and time spent engaging with sport and physical activity. As previous research has found, peoples' neighbourhoods are directly related to physical activity levels and can have lasting effects on mental health and social wellbeing (Natural England, 2009). Within the physical environment, natural green spaces have been considered beneficial for people's health for many years (Gladwell et al., 2013). Cohen et al (2007) have also found a positive correlation between urban green space and increased amounts of physical activity and so exercise performed outside may feel easier and more enjoyable (Gladwell et al., 2013). However, communities who have restricted access to outdoor space often experience higher levels of inequality with regards physical activity and so there is a disparity between those of higher and lower socioeconomic backgrounds. For example, Mitchell and Popham (2008) discovered that families with greater access to green space experience lower levels of inequality for all causes and cause-specific mortality. To explore this further, Gidlow and Ellis (2011) also investigated neighbourhood green space in deprived urban communities and the types of barriers people face accessing it. They collected data from both adults and young

people who lived within the catchment of the study area, with the young people aged between 12 and 15 years. Through discussion with participants, it became clear amongst both the adults and young people that the amount and ease of access to green space was highly valued. For example, 'when asked to identify green space they spoke positively about large sub-regional or district parks, which they visited most frequently for recreation' (Gidlow and Ellis, 2011; p.994). This shows the importance of the physical environment and why certain areas may have lower or higher activity levels compared to others. Specifically, young people shared that they were regular users of the intervention park in their area, where they typically played football or socialised with friends. However, participants made suggestions for new equipment to be added, many of the facilities were outdated and not suitable for their age group. They argued "it's all for babies" (Gidlow and Ellis, 2011: p.998) and so did not encourage them to interact with sport and physical activity in these spaces. In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the need for greater access and improved facilities to increase levels of sport and physical activity amongst both adults and young people living in the area. This study provides an insight into the subject field; however it was conducted over ten years ago and so the present study aims to create a clearer picture of local communities today and how they can be improved.

In support of this study, research by Mytton et al (2012) has also investigated the relationship between green space and physical activity where a total of 54,296 participants were sampled over 3 years of data collection. As also found by Gidlow and Ellis, their study showed that people living in areas with more green space, specifically in England, are more likely to achieve the government recommended guidelines for physical activity. Mytton et al (2012) concluded, local areas with higher amounts of green space promote safe participation in activities such as walking, running, cycling and ball games. However, the authors recommend that future research should aim to further understand 'why access to green space has an effect on overall physical activity… but fails to have an effect on the types of activity that occur' (Mytton et al., 2012: p. 1041).

Further research conducted by Abbasi et al (2016) has also evaluated the impact of open space and its quality in deprived urban areas. They state that despite a general growth in open green spaces, 'the most deprived areas still suffer from low quality and poorly maintained open spaces when compared to affluent areas' (Abbasi et al., 2016: p.194). This highlights

the inequality of space and access for people from differing socio-economic backgrounds. Their findings conclude that good access to open space is positively associated with improvements in people's wellbeing, user satisfaction, quality of life and social inclusion. This has been supported by Richardson et al (2013), who researched the influence of urban green space on people's health and found that those living in areas with greater access to green space have a significantly lower risk of suffering from poor mental and physical health, including cardiovascular related diseases. Thus, it is important that there are increased efforts made in the areas and communities which need it most. Places with less access to green space must be targeted with place-specific intervention to ensure people living in these areas are able to maintain their physical and mental health.

The Social Environment

To understand a place, and how it may impact the people living there, the social environment must also be considered. As Franzini et al (2009) have argued, the social environment can play a more significant role on physical activity participation, than the physical environment. For example, how safe an area is, is the most extensively studied factor in relation to the impact of a neighbourhood's social environment. As found by Bennet et al (2007), low neighbourhood safety correlates directly with lower levels of physical activity in that area. This has also been found by Baum et al in 2009 who discovered that residents' perceptions of how safe their local area is are directly linked to health outcomes. For example, those who feel less safe where they live are more likely to experience higher levels of anxiety (Middleton, 1998) and worse physical health (Macintyre and Ellaway, 2000). As a way of providing insight into the importance of children's family culture, Wheeler (2012) conducted a study to evaluate its significance. Results highlighted that children in the study were frequently active, participating in at least two sporting activities outside of school a week, as well as regular non- organised physical activity such as cycling, swimming, walking and playing in the park. In relation to family culture, it became clear that parents played a significant role in their children's engagement with sport and physical activity. The main reasons for parents' encouragement and support, fell into different themes: their children enjoyed sport and physical activity, it kept them fit and healthy, and it was a good way for them to make friends and promote future participation. From their findings, Wheeler (2012) argues 'sporting cultures are transmitted through groups of families' (p.240). They report,

'there was clearly a network of families on the housing estates, and sport-related behaviours and beliefs appeared to be diffused between them' (p.240). Many of the parents were in the same 'social bubbles' and invested a lot of time, money and energy into their children's sporting activities. This highlights the importance of family culture within a place and the type of activities which are valued in certain communities. In summary, children are more likely to participate in sport and physical activity if it is considered a good thing to do and is promoted by their parents and peers. However, this may vary depending on the number of facilities, access to outdoor green space and general attitudes within different social environments.

<u>The Influence of Place on Young People</u>

As highlighted, place and space can have positive and negative effects on young people's lives, both in and outside of sport and physical activity. Therefore, it is important to analyse place and consider the influences it may have on children's lives as a whole and specifically on their participation in sport and physical activity. As Jack (2010) has emphasised, where a child lives is where they spend most of their time. During young people's upbringing, a place can become more familiar and important to them as they grow up. It is those who develop a positive sense of attachment to their local area who feel most accepted and included in their community (McCreanor et al., 2006). Place can also have an influence on young people's self-identity. This is important to consider in the 'development trajectories of historically marginalized and underserved youth' (Prince, 2014: p.3) as the last few decades of evidence have found that children's residential environments are connected to their early-years health development (Minh et al., 2017). However, much of the research around this topic was conducted over 10 years ago, and so as part of the present study, the influence of place will be explored and how young people feel about their local area and their interaction with its spaces will be considered.

Research by Matthews (1992) found that children's engagement with place was heavily dependent on their age. During children's latter years of primary school, they spent more time engaging with their local environment than during adolescence, when they were more likely to explore the wider areas of the town or city. Other research by Thomas and Thompson

(2004) also explored the perceived safeness and potential risks in an area, and how this affects children's interaction with spaces within their community. They carried out a series of interviews with children aged 10-11yrs, to understand attitudes towards their environment to guide the work and implementation of policy makers. The main finding of this research highlight the inequality of access to high quality natural environments between young people living in different areas, particularly urban and rural. Participants were also very territorial over their area. For example, children in rural areas talked negatively about urban areas and vice versa. However, it is those from rural areas, typically from more affluent families, who can engage more widely with their surroundings generally due to having bigger gardens, living on farms, and having access to privately owned land. Children from urban backgrounds commonly did not have access to these kinds of outdoor spaces, either at home or school, which meant they were often restricted to lower levels of activity compared with their peers from more advantaged backgrounds (Thomas and Thompson, 2004). The authors highlight, 'all children benefit from the opportunities provided by access to outdoor spaces, but these benefits are currently not equally distributed' (Thomas and Thompson, 2004: p.11). It also became clear that 'the worse an environment looks, the less children are able to play freely' (Thomas and Thompson, 2004: p.3). For instance, factors such as safety, lack of investment to facilities, overcrowding and poverty all restricted children's opportunity and experience of their outside space. Participants argued 'they want less traffic, better public transport, more green space, trees, dens and hiding places and less litter' (p.4). Subsequently, Thomas and Thompson (2004) recommend that specific changes should be made, including the improvement and accessibility to quality public spaces for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. They also expressed that greater attention to young people's opinions about the design of public spaces should be made. This study allowed for an in-depth evaluation of children's interaction with place, exploring the inequalities different groups in society are facing and the areas which policy makers need to prioritise. The authors have also highlighted the importance of involving children in the literature. They state, 'children are a powerful symbol for the future… [however] children have played only a passive role in the development and implementation of environmental policy' (p.4). Thus more research should aim to investigate how place impacts young people's participation in sport and their views on this and up to date research would also allow for comparisons to be made, highlighting how policy may or may not have improved over time.

A report in 2007 by The Children's Society, also found that the opinion of 43% of adults was that children under 14 years-old should not be allowed outside of the home with friends, without adult supervision. This attitude towards young people and their interaction with a place and its surrounding areas, further highlights negative influences on their activity and engagement levels. Such statistics also offer further insight into why children may feel disconnected to their community and disapproved of when playing outside. To understand this further, Van Der Burgt (2008) conducted a study into children's perception of themselves and others in local spaces. This research study took place in Sweden, specifically within different neighbourhoods in an average-sized town. Findings from countries outside of the United Kingdom may allow for greater insight and the ability to compare which may help to improve current policy. The authors of the paper argue that previous research on children's geography has typically analysed where children spend most of their time. However, they aimed to focus more on children's view of their own neighbourhoods in comparison to where others live and how they feel about this. A common theme expressed by participants was their fondness and pride over their own neighbourhood, they related this to feeling 'at home and safe… because they had friends there'. When describing why they like their neighbourhoods, children often talked about the locality of facilities including football fields, school, shops and the city centre. In all interviews, participants referred positively to their own neighbourhood as being 'quiet'. For example, Salem, aged 12 from Backhagen, stated, "*a quiet neighbourhood is a place where you do not have to worry about getting into trouble*" (p.261). Sanna, aged 13 from Sandberga, also commented, "*you do not have to be afraid while playing and walking outside in a quiet place*" (p.261). This area of literature allows for further understanding into young people's attitudes towards where the place they live and the type of relationship they have with their local area. However, this study took place over 15 years ago, and so it is important to explore the current state of affairs and explore how young people today feel about such topics so better to inform current and future policy and its implementation.

Robinson (2009) centred their research around the 'issue of nightscapes and leisure spaces in relation to youth' (p.501). The author specifically evaluates young people's use of streets and park spaces and how they are considered complex systems, acting as sites for transition in their lives. As Crouch (1998) argued, young people are having to adapt to the shrinking access of space with an increase of surveillance in society. Robinsons (2009) study took place

in three different locations, within the south of England. They argue that 'the park' is a place of few restrictive boundaries as, 'it is not a space where behaviour is subdued or affected by adult authority. Peer interactions determine what occurs there' (p.504). These spaces were used as sites for young people to express themselves and they often claimed the park as their own. This study offers an insight into how young people use different leisure spaces in their area and the role these facilities play in youth development and transition. However, like other studies, this research was conducted over 10 years ago and does not consider the impact of place on young people's participation in sport and physical activity. A more recent study by Sandford and Quarmby (2018) also explored the pressure on young people due to social media and how this impacts their health, through an analysis of issues relating to space, place and identity. The authors of this study argue that it is important to understand the concepts of space and place to better interpret young people's everyday social practices. Blundell (2016) also suggests that core social spaces for young people include family, school, peer groups and more recently, the world of social media. Therefore, they are not just part of a local community sharing geographical space but are also a part of 'communities without propinquity' (Blundell, 2016: p.47). These encounters which usually take place online facilitated by technology and are becoming more frequent and meaningful in children's lives. Blundell (2016) conclude that young people's identities are becoming more complex and multi-dimensional. For example, they suggest that 'with digital spaces now representing a fundamental part of young people's social experiences, there is also an increased blurring of boundaries between real and virtual space' (Sandford and Quarmby, 2018: p.129). From this we can infer that young people's social media presence is growing and so thus helps to understand why young people may be less likely to engage with their geographical local area and community. They may see less reason to go outside and interact with real people, as their online identity may be just as important.

The Influence of Place on Sport and Physical Activity Participation

Inclusive, engaged neighbourhoods, with access to safe areas in which physical activity can be performed, are more likely to experience a higher percentage of young people engaging with sport and physical activity (Famke et al., 2019). For example, places where physical activity is promoted successfully to young people is a key strategy to prevent physical health related issues such as childhood obesity (WHO, 2012).

To understand the influence of place on sport and physical activity participation, a study carried out by Eime et al (2015) explored people's participation in relation to socio-economic status (SES) and geographical remoteness. They argue that prior to their study much of the research exploring the influences on participation in physical activity, has commonly found that those living in places of a higher SES experience higher levels of activity. This is often due to higher number of sporting facilities in comparison to lower SES areas where there are also less free-for-use facilities available, as well as paid facilities. However, the authors of this study state that there is little awareness surrounding the impact of SES and residential location on physical activity participation. Moreover, throughout their research, Eime et al (2015) demonstrate the complexity of SES and location across the different contexts of participation. They found only 44% of 95 'types of PA showed a significant association between participation and neighbourhood SES' (p.6). It was also concluded that, 'few types of PA were cost or remoteness prohibitive in terms of participation' (Eime et al., 2015: p.11). From these findings it can be inferred that once frequent engagement in sport and physical activity is established, SES and remoteness of location became less of an influence. A limitation of this study may be the evaluation of people aged 15 and above, as the 'patterns of relationship between participation, SES and remoteness may be very different for children younger than 15 years' (Eime et al., 2015: p.11). To explore the different age ranges in young people, the present study will involve participants aged 11 to 14.

Place may also impact young people's education establishment, and as a result, their participation in sport and physical activity. For example, those from more affluent backgrounds are more likely to attend fee-paying schools. As the Institute for Fiscal Studies report highlights, those accessing private schools are highly concentrated among affluent families (Green, 2022). In relation to sporting involvement, it has been proven that Team GB's Olympians are four times more likely to have been privately educated, than the rest of the population. For instance, 50% of the women's hockey team at the 2016 Rio Olympics attended fee-paying schools when they were younger compared to 7% of the wider population (Sutton Trust, 2016). This highlights the inequalities within sport, specifically the access to certain sports and the ability to compete at the highest level. Hoekman et al (2017) study investigated sport and physical activity participation in the social and physical

environment in the Netherlands. They evaluated the differences between urban and rural areas, arguing that previous studies have focused on the social position, education and social demographics as a way of explaining differences in activity levels in society. (e.g., Downward et al., 2011), whereas there has been little academic research exploring the geographical aspect, including the rural urban divide and the differences in the physical and social spaces of these areas. Hoekman et al (2017) consider factors such as climate, available space, safety and neighbourhood composition as way of looking beyond just socio-demographics, which many studies have previously analysed (European Commission, 2014). Their findings concluded there were 'higher rates of weekly sport participation in rural areas than in urban areas' (Heokman et al., 2017: p.336) with the social environment being the most influential factor. The authors of this study claim that policy makers need to be more aware of the importance of the social environment, especially in lower socio-economic status neighbourhoods; social networks should be used to promote positive attitudes towards sport in these areas to increase overall participation levels. However, a limitation of this study was the sole focus on sport facilities. It 'did not include the public space as part of the physical environment' (Heokman et al., 2017: p.366). To address this gap, the present study will aim to consider the different public spaces in Wallsend, understanding young people's's feelings towards these spaces, how often they use them and what they use them for.

In support of Heokman et al (2017), Deelen et al (2016) also explored the impact of the physical environment, evaluating the importance of subjective constraints and spatial factors and their influence on the frequency of sporting participation. Their results highlight the influence of these factors and how they are linked to sports facilities and supply, accessibility constraints and to a lesser extent, skills and knowledge constraints (Deelen et al., 2016). Their findings also emphasised the impact of travel and long-distance journeys to and from sport. For example, people experienced accessibility barriers more often when travelling further than those who only had to go relatively short distances. They found that time and accessibility constraints heavily impacted the frequency of sports participation, often in a negative way. In review of this study, it is one of the first projects to 'investigate the relative importance of subjective constraints, compared to objectively measured spatial factors and individual characteristics on sports frequency' (p.257). The authors of this study argue that future studies should consider places of a more diverse demographic specifically which types of public spaces are used for which different sports and

how these impacts on participants travel time.

Another study in 2017 by Molina-Garcia et al, conducted in Spain, analysed the role of neighbourhoods built-up environment and socio-economic status in relation to multiple health outcomes in adolescents. Their findings identified an association between physical activity behaviours, time spent sedentary and obesity levels among Spanish young people. This research supports many other studies which have brought attention to the impact of the built environment on adolescents' behaviour (Ding et al., 2011). A notable outcome of this research was the positive correlation between neighbourhood SES, participation in sports teams and engagement with physical activity outside of school. Walking to school was less common in lower SES communities, while spending time watching TV and being sedentary was higher. This was often due to there being fewer sports facilities and organised sports in these areas. Therefore, the authors of this study suggest that community-based sport and physical activity should be largely emphasised and promoted to adolescents living in economically disadvantaged areas 'by offering subsidized fees and free transportation' (Molina- Garcia et al: p.92). They also propose that more research should be conducted to understand the relationship between young people and the built environment and time spent sedentary during weekdays. The location of this study provides an international context, allowing for comparison in different cultures.

Kelso et al (2021) has also highlighted the influence of physical infrastructures including parks, buildings and sporting facilities as well as social frameworks, such as socio-cultural norms, SES and social networks, which all have the ability to enable or hinder physical activity trends in young people. Through their research, they aimed to build on previous research and not solely focus on whether environmental features positively or negatively affect physical activity, but also to question the location in which occurs. This way, 'insights into locations that are actually used (or have the potential to be used) for PA are needed to develop more effective strategies to support active living' (p.2). It has been suggested by Mauvais-Jarvis et al., (2020) that research into the locations and uses of space for physical activity should consider the differences by sex and/or gender. For example, Uddin et al (2018) previously found that females are more likely to encounter lack of available places to participate in physical activity as a barrier. To investigate trends in the literature Kelso et al (2021) reviewed 32 studies examining the various locations of physical activity and sedentary

behaviour in school aged children, adolescents and adults. They found that reports showed that physical activity to most frequently occur in the neighbourhoods, schools, recreational and home environments, as well as commercial facilities. Other general findings showed MVPA to be quite low in parks and green spaces yet higher in the school environment and built environments including buildings and streets (Burgi et al., 2016). As a result of their findings, Kelso et al (2021) have recommended that future policy should aim to increase the number of active-friendly design features to promote and encourage young people to participate in more sport and physical activity. It should also consider differences in sex and gender. In review of this recent study, it can be argued that through in-depth analyses of different studies the authors were able to gather a thorough representation of the literature. They also explored differences in sex and gender while taking into consideration specific geographical locations (Kelso et al., 2021).

The Participation of Young People in Sport and Physical Activity

A study conducted in 2022 by Nelson et al carried out an integrative literature review on the benefits and barriers of sport for young people from low-income settings. The authors chose to focus on this group in society, as they often have less opportunity to participate in sport, whilst being at higher risk of negative social and health outcomes (Super et al., 2018); 'sport provides structure outside of school that many children from low-income settings may lack' (Nelson et al., 2022: p.2). To ensure in-depth findings, thirteen articles were reviewed in the study. A key finding was the lack of current research into the effects of sport and physical activity on children proving that there is still much to be done in this area to increase participation levels amongst children from more deprived areas, who often face more emotional and social challenges, preventing them from participating in sport. A recurring trend throughout Nelson et al (2022) review was the importance of the social aspect in sport and physical activity, especially among children from families of higher deprivation. For example, the data showed 'the urgent need to promote equity in sport participation among children' (p.9). Specific barriers to emerge in this review were children's access to facilities and organised sporting activities as well as economic challenges, as parents with a lower income are more likely to be single and working overtime (Finkelstein et al., 2017). This can

be a barrier on their children's ability to access events, clubs and sporting activities outside of their local community. Nelson et al (2022) argue that there is still work to be done regarding the equal access to sport and physical activity participation. They suggest that further research should analyse current barriers in this field and consider best practice to make sport more accessible for all. They also state the importance of involving stakeholders, parents and children in research projects.

A supporting study by Brockman et al (2011) has investigated the self-reported motivators, barriers and facilitators in children's active play. The authors worked with 11 focus groups asking, "why do you take part in active play?". They divided the themes into 1) socialising; 2) preventing boredom; 3) health benefits; and 4) freedom. A standout motivation, which frequently came up in the findings of this study, was the sense of enjoyment children had in participating with others in a social setting. For example, a female participant from a low-income background stated, "*I like meeting people outside that you wouldn't normally and playing games with them, that you can't really do in the house*".

Many other female participants also referenced the need to prevent boredom and avoid sedentary activities such as watching TV or playing on games consoles. However, male participants were more likely to refer to the health benefits of active play, both physical and mental, arguing it is a good way "*to burn off energy*" (Male, middle/high deprivation). The final theme reported, was the sense of freedom that participating in active play gave the young people, they often referred to it as an 'escape' to get away from adult supervision, rules or structure. Factors limiting participation were also discussed. The first theme to emerge was parental constraints and children were asked "*do your parents have rules about your outdoor play*?" and if so "*what are these rules*?". Throughout discussion it was discovered that many participants' parents had rules which impacted their child's active play, often motivated by social fears revolving around strangers, teenagers and general neighbourhood safety concerns. They were also asked about other, more general factors preventing them from engaging with the outdoors. For example, it was found that many female participants were restricted from playing outside due to the presence of older children in the area. Both male and female participants discussed the importance of owning a mobile phone to keep them in touch with their parents, when playing outside. Those with mobile phones had more independence. The authors of this study concluded that young people in Britain value active

play but are often restricted by social and environmental factors which should be addressed by local governments, urban planners and community groups, allowing for more safe and accessible outdoor spaces for children. They suggest that further research should be done with single sex focus groups surrounding this area of study (Brockman et al., 2011).

A later study in 2018 by Budd et al, investigated the role of enjoyment surrounding physical activity and if it facilitates the transition from the social and physical environment to MVPA, in early adolescent girls living in the United States. The female participants used in this study were racially and ethnically diverse, and the average age of the sample was 11.95 years. In the research findings,
there was no evidence that there was any 'mediation by PA enjoyment in the pathways from the social and physical environment to moderate-to-vigorous intensity PA, among this sample of sixth grade
girls' (Budd et al., 2018: p.6) despite there being a correlation in other relating studies. However, the study provided further research, uncovering the relationship between environmental factors andphysical actvity enjoyment which can aid the work of families, schools and communities in terms of environmental strategies to promote physical activity enjoyment within this age group. It is also important to consider the types of sport and physical activity that children are engaging with at school, aiming to understand the activities they most like to do and the opportunities that they have in school may help to increase their participation in the local community during out of school hours. As Beighle et al (2006) argued, children spend most of their time in school and so this setting provides an ideal environment for PA promotion and increased opportunity. For instance, Watson et al (2015) have analysed the perceived barriers and facilitators for girls' participation in physical activity aged 12 to 13 years during the school lunch break. This study took place in two schools located in Southern Australia. Four main themes were brought to the attention of the study, through discussion with 13 female participants. The first theme related to the gendered school uniform policy, as many girls argued that the clothes they were made to wear restrict their participation in sport and physical activity. For example, one female participant from a high SES school stated, "*if we had shorts, I'd probably run more because when you run, they [skirt] sort of get in the way and rub on your knees*" (Watson et al., 2015: p.5). The girls also highlighted the difference between their unform and the boys', 'making it easier for boys to be active' (Watson et al., 2015: p.5). The second theme related to gender tensions and

stereotypes. Girls were very aware of how they were viewed by their peers. Many were conscious of the types of activities that they participated in at school and they did not want to engage with sports that were not considered "gender appropriate" by others. This perception was discussed mainly in the low SES school; however, it was also clear that girls in the high SES school wanted to be viewed as behaving gender appropriately. For example, some girls explained that 'if they chose to participate in activities not considered "gender appropriate" their friends would exclude them from conversations or talk about them behind their backs' (Watson et al., 2015: p.5). Some girls also talked about their experience of bullying from boys in their school, this was more prevalent in the higher SES school, where boys would often make fun of the less physically competent girls for trying to participate in an activity. The third theme to emerge from the study was the effect that biological maturity has on girls PAparticipation. Participants implied that biological changes associated with maturation, may have impacts on their engagement with PA during the school day. For example, one girl suggested that 'having a physique that is not conducive to PA may act as a barrier to being physically active' (Watson et al., 2015: p.8) and others may also judge them for it. The final theme highlighted explores the effect of self-perceived ability or competence on participation in PA. For most, their own interpretation of their ability was directly linked to their enjoyment of PA, for example one participant from the higher SES school described herself as someone who was not physically active and not very good at sports. She also perceived boys to be naturally good at sport, which may explain why she and other girls were not as active as their male counterparts. In conclusion, this study has brought about interesting findings to help explain the frequent disparity in PA participation levels amongst young males and females, and why girls are often discouraged from engaging with sport and PA at school. However, this study was limited by the small sample sized used and future research should aim to use focus groups with a larger number of participants.

To improve sport and physical activity participation levels amongst young people, policymakers must understand the changes which need to be made and implemented to ensure young people are engaging with the governments recommended guidelines of 60 minutes of MVPA per day (Department of Health and Physical activity guidelines for children and young people, 2011). To address this, James et al (2018) conducted a study into the recommendations suggested by teenagers to improve physical activity levels for their age group. This study was conducted in South Wales, United Kingdom. Findings emphasised the

perceived barriers to physical activity by teenagers, which were related to cost and accessibility to local facilities. The authors state that 'the repeated acknowledgement of these barriers in this study suggests that despite a number of initiatives implemented to tackle these obstacles, the issue has not been adequality addressed long term' (James et al., 2018: p.6). This shows that further attention needs to be paid to groups in society which face these problems the most, and more work needs to be done to reduce these types of barriers. Moreover, both male and female participants in this study discussed the desire for more opportunity to participate in unstructured activity and it became clear that current provisions are not catering for the needs of young people today. Teenagers expressed feelings of frustration due to not being encouraged to participate in their local community and disengagement with local sport and physical activity provision. They suggested that there should be more accessible facilities at low or no cost. For example, one female participant explained how she would have to borrow money from her parents to access facilities and regularly engage with sport and physical activity, which she knew they were reluctant to pay for. It was also evident that both activities and facilities should be more local to where adolescents lived, as many of their local facilities, including parks, were in a poor condition and falling into states of neglect, due to broken equipment. Many also argued the need for local councils to proactively monitor the upkeep of facilities, as well as making activities and equipment more age appropriate.

Young people's engagement in physical education

Physical education lessons are widely acknowledge as being one of the most effective ways to engage and promote sport and physical activity to young people (Jones et al., 2020). Classes are often used to deliver physical activity interventions as they are a part of the school day and young people's daily routine (Jones et al., 2020). However, Beni et al (2018) have argued that there has been a lack of empirical research specifically focusing on the experience of young people in physical education at school, how they perceive a meaningful experience and how to facilitate this. This was also acknowledged by Williams and Woodhouse (1996) who stated that young people's views have been 'a neglected dimension of research into [P.E] curriculum practice' (p.212). To highlight the experiences of young people, Beni et al (2018) reviewed 50 individual studies, which collected a broad range of

patterns and 'represented common individual interpretations of how meaningfulness is ascribed to experiences in physical education and youth sport' (p.296). A popular theme to arise across the studies reviews was the idea that young females often prefer non-sport based activities such as dance or personal fitness when engaging in physical education. The disengagement of young females in physical education lessons has been a well-researched problem over the past 40 years (Oliver and Kirk, 2015) . More recently Roberts et al (2020) have explored the context of physical education and the experiences of girls who challenge gender norms in a progressive secondary school. They concluded, most of the participants' experience of physical education were not progressive and instead, regularly imposed gender practices and expectations were 'naturalised in PE' (p.14) which limited girls' learning and opportunities for success.

Furthermore, according to Subramaniam and Silverman (2007) the amount of enjoyment and learning young people gain from engaging with physical education relies on a positive attitude towards the subject. Thus, it is important students' preferences and experiences are listened to in relation to their sport, physical activity and physical education participation. As Dishmore and Bailey (2011) have also proven, a positive outlook on physical education is a vital part in encouraging an active lifestyle outside of school as well. To better understand young people's attitudes and motivation for physical education, Safvenbom et al (2015) collected data from a range of students attending schools in Norway, aged 12 to 19 years old. Their study indicates that the majority of Norwegian students enjoy physical education, however there is a significant decrease in positivity as the young people got older (from middle school to high school) and young females reported high levels of negativity compared to their male counterparts.

In summary, the literature reviewed, shows that the physical and social environment of a place has great impact on people's perception and interaction with where they live. Factors such as safety and the influence of family are commonly found to affect people's experience of a community and, as a result, their levels of engagement in sport and physical activity. Previous studies have also highlighted the importance of involving young people in the research and listening to their experiences of where they live and how they interpret their local surroundings. This can help to understand their health-related behaviours and why they may or may not interact with outdoor spaces. As previous authors have found, there can be

great disparity and inequality of sport and physical activity participation depending on the type of area people live in. Recuring themes, are prevalent across the different countries and contexts in the studies reviewed.

Chapter Three: Methods

This chapter will address the methodological perspectives of the present study and the ways in which data will be collected. Why the methods of data collection have been chosen will also be addressed highlighting the strengths and weaknesses and why they are best suited to the current studies aims. Finally, the method of data analysis will be discussed to understand this process in detail and how it will be used to best capture the methods findings.

Overall Research Orientation

To understand the perspective of the research study, the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning it will now be discussed. This is a crucial aspect of any qualitative research study, as one of its central characteristics is to discover the meaning of different subject areas to different people (Smith and Sparkes, 2020). Smith and McGannon (2018) argued all research methods take influence from these concepts either knowingly or unknowingly. To provide context around methodology itself, Crotty (1998) offered a definition stating that it is, 'the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes' (p.3).

Ontology refers to 'what is the form and nature of reality, and, therefore what is there that can be known about it?' (Smith and Sparkes, 2016: p.2) which Richards (2003) also defined as 'the nature of our beliefs about reality' (p.33). This research study adopts an interpretivist ontological approach. Elster (2007) defined interpretivism as a lens through which a person's character interacts with the social and cultural world. It provides a belief system for people to view and conduct research (Potrac et al., 2014). To help define interpretivism, Potrac et al (2014) argued that it 'fundamentally rejects the belief that the social world…can be examined and understood through the assumptions and methodologies natural scientists use to examine the physical world.' Atkinson (2012) also related it to how people see the world in front of them, and how they make sense of their own experiences, and how this then impacts their feelings, thoughts and behaviours.

To define epistemology, Gall et al (2003) stated that it is 'the branch of philosophy that studies

the nature of knowledge and the process by which knowledge is acquired and validated' (p.13). It explores the relationship between the researcher and participant and the attempt to understand reality (Smith and Sparkes, 2020). Specifically, epistemology aims to consider two questions, "How do I know that reality" and "What is the relationship between the researcher and research participants?" (Smith and Sparkes, 2020: p.1002). In relation to the present research study, it was a constructionist epistemology which underpinned the project. This approach holds the belief that other people's experiences and perceptions of situations will always be influenced by someone else, in this case the participant will always be impacted by the researcher (Smith and Sparkes, 2020). Qualitative research methods allow for in-depth investigations into subject areas and are often used to explore people's feelings, experiences and phenomena in socio-cultural worlds (Moden and Middelthon, 2015). It is also a type of social inquiry which analyses the way different people interpret and make sense of their own experiences (Smith and Sparkes, 2014). This can therefore allow for more detailed results to help explain certain trends or patterns, which quantitative research may struggle to do (Busetto et al., 2020). As Castleberry and Nolen (2018) suggested, the main aim of qualitative research is to gather a better understanding of a subject area, through those who have direct experience. It recognises the value of different people's perspectives and thus creates a realistic and well represented picture of the truth. Qualitative methodology has also become more popular in the sport and exercise science field (Evans et al., 2021) and was decided suitable for this research project to understand the role of place and the influence it has on young people's sporting lives. Within this research project, three methods of data collection were used: focus groups, mapping and interviews. Focus groups and mapping exercises were used with the young people and interviews with the adults This was to ensure detailed, insightful data was gathered and that the most appropriate methods were used with the different participants.

Focus Groups

The first method used in the study was focus groups. Focus groups are a qualitative data collection method used to discuss specific topics with multiple individuals. They aim to gather people's personal experiences, beliefs, perceptions and attitudes (Simpson and Wood, 2004) and are a commonly used method in qualitative research and specifically within the field of social science and health-related studies (R.S. Barbour, 1999). Focus groups are also frequently used to collect data in participatory research, especially with young people (Bangoli and Clark, 2010). This is because they can create a safe peer environment for them (Alder et al., 2019). This study

involved four young people at a time, in each focus group, all from the same school and year group, so that they felt at ease and could share their honest opinions and experiences. The young people were split by gender and current level of physical activity participation identified by the Physical Education staff member. In total four focus groups were created, titled: (1) year 7 "active" girls, (2) year 7 "non-active" girls, (3) year 8 non- active boys and (4) year 9 "active" boys. As suggested by Krueger (1994), the researcher should categorise groups by characteristics such as gender, age range, ethnic and social class background.

This is likely to create a more homogenous group and encourage participants' willingness to take part and engage. Smith and Parr (2007) have also highlighted the benefit of conducting single-sex focus groups as participants were often taught in single-sex groups within their physical education lessons and so this was a more 'normal' environment (Bryman, 2004). However, some researchers have argued that those unfamiliar with each other may be more likely to share honest opinions due to the lack of pre-existing relationships and feeling of judgment (Thomas et al., 1995). The Physical Education Technician was also present in each of the four focus groups.

The main aim of the focus groups was to encourage the young people to talk between themselves, and with the researchers as much as possible allowing for the researcher to facilitate and moderate group discussion between participants; as Shawn et al (2011) suggested, focus groups can help to avoid the power imbalance which can sometimes occur between researchers and participants. This is often seen between an adult and a child in an interview setting. Furthermore, a group activity can often be a good way to engage participants' attention and facilitate their participation (Cammisa et al., 2011). The young people were split into four groups, categorised by their age, gender and current physical activity levels as differing interests, desires, and attitudes can negatively affect group dynamics in mixed gender teenager groups (Heary & Hennessy, 2002).

Influenced by Sparkes and Smith (2013), this study involved four focus groups, each consisting of four young people. Having too many or too few participants in each group can prevent good discussion. The Physical Education staff member separated the young people into either "active" or "non-active" based on her knowledge of how much sport and physical activity they currently participated in. The focus groups took place in a classroom within the participants' school, which was a familiar environment for them Although some young people may have spoken more freely if the study had taken place outside of the school setting, as Smith (1972) has argued, researchers must take into consideration the participants' comfort, access to the venue and potential levels of

distraction. There should also be sufficient room for activities to take place (Nyumba et al., 2018) and enough seating areas for all participants and the researcher to see each other (Sampson, 1972). Prior to the focus groups taking place, a 'focus group plan' was constructed to allow for a substantial number of topics to be discussed in 45 minutes. The different subject areas revolved around: (1) the participants' mapping activity, (2) the area of Wallsend, and what it means to them, and (3) the types of influences on their participation in sport and physical activity in Wallsend. This pre-planned structure ensured the most effective use of the time spent with the participants. Furthermore, to facilitate discussion, a PowerPoint presentation was also used to help bring to life the different topics and give the young people a point of reference if needed. The presentation was designed in such a way to appeal to young people and to ensure that the information could be easily understood. Some of the slides also included prompts to aid discussion and to give the young people some ideas on which they could expand upon.

Within the focus groups mapping was used to highlight the types of sport the young people participated in, where they took place, how they travelled there and their levels of enjoyment. It was made clear to the participants that they should draw something to resemble the sport or activity they engage with and score each diagram on a scale of one to ten. Mapping is a commonly used method of data collection with young people (Leonard, 2006), which has often been used to gather information relating to their perceptions of specific spaces (e.g. Leonard, 2007). As Gowers (2022) argued, 'maps are a powerful means of conveying detailed information about a place or physical environment' (p.211). Moreover, Clark (2017) also demonstrated the use of visual maps and how they are especially suited to research involving young people's ideas and the environment. In the present study, whilst drawing, participants often talked through what they were doing and were asked questions about their work. As Fargas-Malet et al (2010) explained, the use of drawing-based activities can be a more engaging and easier way for young people to express their experiences and opinions. It has also been described as, 'a useful and fairly quick way to gain considerable amounts of information in a relatively short-period of time' (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010: p.13). This method proved to be an interactive way of focusing the young people and a way of allowing them to express their personal experiences and opinions around the area and the types of sport and physical activity they participated in.

Participant Summary of The Focus Groups

Characteristics	Participants
Total	16
Male	8
Female	8
Non-active	8
Active	8

Semi-structured Interviews

The second phase of data collection involved conducting semi-structured interviews with adults who had a connection with Wallsend. Within the sport and exercise science research field, semi-structured interviews are a commonly used method of data collection (Smith and Sparkes, 2016). They are designed to ask multiple pre-planned questions surrounding a topic, each with a focus, but also broad enough for participants to expand on and draw upon their own personal experience (Smith and Sparkes, 2016). The process involved in this method includes three steps: developing the interview guide, conducting the interviews and analysing the data gathered (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). The interviews took place after the focus groups, and this was decided to expand on the data from the young peoples' focus groups. For example, when planning the interview guide, results from the focus groups were used as way of ensuring that the aims of the study were met. One to one interviews are an important method of data collection and can facilitate and gather detailed, honest experiences and perspectives from the participants (Lambert and Loiselle, 2008). The use of semi-structured interviews can also allow for extended conversations, which can branch out into other related topics (Ryan et al., 2009), as well as creating a more relaxed atmosphere and sense of openness. As Pugh (2013) also suggested, interviews can allow for connections and relationships to be built, unlike the use of questionnaires or surveys. In total, three semi-structured interviews were held. One was conducted in person and two over Microsoft Teams due to convenience. The interview held in person was with the Physical Education Staff Member. This interview was conducted in a room of choice by the interviewee and was a place where they felt familiar and comfortable with. The interviews online were with a Football Coach in the local area and a Wallsend Innovation Officer.

The interview guides were created after the focus groups with the young people. Interview questions were structured in an open-ended way to allow for further discussion surrounding the

person's own experience and their perceptions of young people's participation in sport and physical activity in Wallsend. Each interview guide was tailored to the current role and experience of the person being interviewed; to allow for in-depth answers and so the participants could speak more freely about the subject. To begin with, a few broad topics, also discussed in the focus groups, were used to create specific questions. These included perspectives on:

- Young people's participation in sport and physical activity in the local area
- School sport and physical education
- Influences on participation

The Wallsend Boys Club was also a topic of discussion with the Football Coach.

Recruitment

The recruitment process is a fundamental part of any research project's methodology, as it can have influences on the researcher's ability to build up a good rapport with potential participants (Negrin et al., 2022). The recruitment of participants was accessed through contact with a local school. Criterion based sampling was used to identify potential child participants; they had to be between the school year groups of 7 to 9 (ages 11 to 14) and English speaking. Both male and female participants were involved in the study, some of whom were identified as regularly physically active and others not. The first step of recruitment involved contacting the Physical Education (PE) lead at a local co-ed school located in Wallsend. Once accepted, I was passed on to the school's PE Technician who was responsible for organising the young people's timetable and their participation in the study. I liaised with the PE Technician to arrange suitable times for potential participants across years 7 to 9 to partake in focus group sessions during the school day. A total of 16 young people took part in the study focus groups, eight of which were categorised as non-active and eight as active.

After the recruitment of child participants, I also contacted potential adult participants. Initial criteria set out for the adult participants, was to have a knowledge of the area and, desirably, to have some involvement with sport. During my visits to the secondary school where the focus groups were carried out, I met the PE Technician who I had previously liaised with. As she was present in the focus groups she had a good understanding of the aims of the study. This was useful as I believe it made her more confident and knowledgeable about the subject area. Other adult participants were recruited through the supervisor of this study.

Young people were recruited to take part in focus groups and adults in semi-structured interviews. Participants were able to take part in as much or as little of the study as they wanted.

Data Analysis

To analyse the interview data, Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) was used. Braun and Clarke (2012) stated that RTA is an easily accessible and theoretically flexible interpretative approach, used in qualitative research to analyse data. Much of its credit is due to Braun and Clarkes' (2006) publication on their use of the method in the field of psychology. They initially argued that RTA was a paradigmatically flexible analytical method, suitable for various ontological and epistemological considerations; however, they now hold the view that RTA is a purely qualitative approach. Braun and Clarke (2021) state that thematic analysis is best conceptualised in different 'versions' and so they specifically defined RTA as able to capture 'approaches that fully embrace qualitative research values and the subjective skills the researchers bring to the process' (p.333). Unlike other approaches of data analysis within qualitative research, RTA is known as being independent of theory and epistemology (Braun and Clarke, 2021) which allows for its flexibility. Therefore, it has been chosen as the method of data analysis for this study as it promotes the ability to carry out an in-depth evaluation on the different topics covered by the participants (Braun and Clarke, 2017). It is also a very structured form of analysis, offering best practice to identify large data sets and all data is evaluated**.** Themes identifies through RTA are analysed as part of a six-step method, this includes: the familiarisation of the data, generating codes, theme development, the review of potential themes, defining the themes and the final writing up of the report. These steps were established and guided by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013). To understand this process, each phase will now be explained.

Familiarisation of data

The familiarisation of the data in this study was carried out in full by the lead researcher, this included the organising of the focus groups/ interviews and conducting and transcribing the interviews and focus groups recordings This was to ensure the researcher was fully aware and familiar with the content provided by the participants and so an in-depth form of analysis could take place (Braun et al., 2016). As Byrne (2022) suggested, the familiarisation phase is an important step in the collecting of valuable information used to answer the overarching research

questions. Therefore, immersing myself in each stage of the research method process, enabled me to personally understand and interpret the

participants' experiences and opinions better and so no key pieces of information were missed. All interviews and focus groups were manually transcribed. This allowed for an enhanced understanding and level of accuracy in the data. Like Braun and Clarke (2013) highlighted, equal attention must be given to the entire depth and breadth of the data, despite this phase of the research being quite time consuming. For example, a second listening and the ability to pause and rewind the recordings ensured full interpretation of the participants' information. The majority of transcriptions were carried out at the same time which also prompted similarities and differences to be identified, creating a wider picture of the overall data set.

Generating Codes

The labelling of codes within the dataset is the initial focus of what will eventually become themes (Bryne, 2021); 'codes are the smallest unit of analysis to capture the research question' (Clarke et al., 2015: p.297). After familiarisation with the data, I began to connect different parts of what had been shared by the participants. Within this process, pieces of information were able to be linked and thus became more ordered, to create more meaningful group data (Tuckett, 2005). During this phase, it was important to remember and refer to the research aims and questions of the study to discover how the dataset was relevant. Specifically, the coding process involved reading and analysing each sentence generated in the transcripts to apply a relevant code. This method of analysis was used for both the interview and focus group data. Different coloured highlighters were used to differentiate the codes. After reading through the data and applying codes first time round, I then re- read for a second time to ensure all the codes were accurate and aligned with the research aims and questions of the overall study. During this process, notes were also made as a reference for each code and as a way of explaining why each code had the label given to it. As Braun and Clarke (2014) recommended, the researcher should document any progress made through the use of iterations of coding to track how they might evolve over time through the six phases. Moreover, 'tracking the evolution of codes will not only aid transparency but will afford the researcher signposts and waypoints to which they may return' (Bryne, 2021: p.1400). In addition to this, I often re-read the literature review of this study to ensure relevant findings were being drawn from the data in relation to the overarching field of research. This familiarisation of the data in comparison to research already conducted would also help later with the write up of the findings section of this study. Examples of codes which were

generated, included topics such as: travel to sport and physical activity, the cost of sport and physical activity and how much sport and physical activity the young people were participating in inside and outside of school.

Generating Themes

Once all the data had been analysed and given a code, the generating of initial themes could begin. The aim of the themes created was to provide some kind of structure and framework to first organise, and then report, the 'researchers analytic observations' (Clarke et al., 2015: p.297). When deciding on whether a theme is relevant, Braun and Clarke (2006) offer some advice suggesting that the researchers should consider the importance and *'keyness'* of a theme. For example, the ability the theme has to capture what is ultimately important to the research question (Campbell et al., 2021: p.2013). Within this part of the data analysis, the focus shifted from the highlighting of individual codes to the interpretation of meaningfulness across the data set, to understand how the different codes may be connected (Bryne, 2021). This involved analysing the different codes and grouping them into different categories. Much of what the participants shared, including the maps, could be linked and divided into different sub-sections on the data. As Byrne (2021) argued, all 'themes should be distinctive and may even be contradictory to other themes but should tie together to produce a coherent and lucid picture of the dataset' (p.1403). This was ensured by considering each code carefully and so the themes were reflective of the data and the research questions could be answered in the best way possible.

Assigning names to themes

The fourth and fifth phase of the data analysis involved reviewing and refining the potential themes' names. This stage influences the write up process of the research project and consequently it requires full understanding and prior in-depth analysis, of the underlying data items (Bryne, 2021). In sum, the researcher should be able to, 'identify which data items to use as extracts when writing up the results of the analyses. (Bryne, 2021: p.1407). Therefore, it is important not to rush this part of the analyses and carefully evaluate the research questions during the process. Initially, in this stage there were too many themes, some of which did not best represent the information included in them and did not specifically answer the overarching research questions of the study. To help address the themes, a series of key questions, proposed by Braun and Clarke (2012: p.65) were evaluated. These were:

- Is it a theme or could it be just a code?
- If it is a theme, what is the quality of this theme (does it tell me something useful about the data set and my research question)?
- What are the boundaries of this theme (what does it include and exclude)?
- Is there enough (meaningful) data to support this theme (is the theme thin or thick)?
- Is the data too diverse and wide ranging (does the theme lack coherence)?

It was important not to rush this stage of analyses, as the themes chosen would ultimately influence the narrative discussed in the next section of the thesis. To ensure clarity, notes were made around what each theme meant and its relevance to the research questions. This also helped to remove, or in some cases add, information which was no longer relevant to a certain theme. Once refined, the final themes were labelled as: Experience of The Local Area, Sport and Physical Activity in the Local Area and Influences on Sport and Physical Activity Participation.

Writing the Analysis

The final part of RTA is the writing up process. This phase may still include the evaluation and editing of themes; however, it should mainly involve using the dataset to expand on and answer the overarching research questions of the study. The write up of the report should underpin the previous work done, including the analysis of the initial transcripts and the creation of codes. Reflexivity

It is important to also consider the subjectivity of the researcher and the impact they have, as well as the subjective experiences of the participants involved (Smith and Sparkes, 2014). Before undertaking any research, I considered my own personal bias and experiences in relation to the research aims and how this might affect data collection. For example, it was important to take into account that I am an outsider and have never lived or worked in the area of Wallsend. Therefore, participants may not be as open or comfortable when discussing certain topics with me, as they would with someone who was based more locally. To enable participants to share their honest opinions I had to be aware of the researcher to participant relationship and build a good rapport with them, so they felt at ease. To ensure reflexivity was maintained throughout the study, I spoke regularly with the supervisors of the project to discuss and reflect on my methods

and any potential biases.

Ethical Considerations

Before any practical research took place, ethical approval was provided by the Department of Sport & Exercise Sciences at Durham University. This is a necessity of any research project to protect its participants and the researcher. Ethical approval promotes the aims of the study such as knowledge, truth and the avoidance of error, as well as ensuring accountability and a sense of mutual respect and fairness (David, 2015).

In relation to the young people in this study, certain ethical considerations needed to be considered. It was important to be mindful of the potential risk of triggering emotional or psychological distress in young people. For example, they may worry about how the researcher will respond to their answers within the focus group, how their information is being used and if discussing sensitive topics may create feelings of discomfort. As the lead researcher, I set out to ensure that the young people were well informed in terms of the confidentiality of their data and had measures in place to respond to any signs of distress or discomfort during the focus groups. Moreover, ways of adapting the research methods to make them more child friendly, include taking breaks during the data collection and conducting the research in a friendly and comfortable environment in which they are familiar (NSPCC Learning, 2023

All participants, who were potentially taking part in the study, were made aware of what was expected of them both via an information sheet and verbally at the beginning of their focus group or interview. This information was clear and concise to avoid confusion. Participants were also encouraged to ask any questions about anything they were unsure of. It was important that all participants were clear on the aims of the study and why they were involved in the research, this way they were able to feel more confident and comfortable taking part in the data collection. Participants were made fully aware of the collection, handling and security of their data. This information was shared through a physical privacy notice, as well as verbally at the beginning of their focus groups or interviews. It was important to be clear with participants to promote openness and clarity. These precautions were taken to aid participants' choice on whether to take part in the study or not.

After participants were made aware of the above, they were asked to sign a consent form to

confirm their participation in the research. This indicated that they agreed with the aims of the study and the sharing of their data. However, they were also made aware that they could withdraw from the study at any given time and the information they had shared would be destroyed. Each child's parent was also made aware of the study and were able to opt out if they wished to do so.

Participant confidentiality

Throughout the study participants were reminded of their confidentiality and the anonymity of their data. Pseudonyms were used at the start of the research project right up until analysis; participants were given code names. No specific information which could be used to identity participants was used in the study, either verbally or written. As way of keeping track of participants and their data, I kept a note of their pseudonym against the information they shared. This was never connected to their real name. All participant information was kept on a password-protect document and university authenticated laptop and the lead researcher was the only person with access to this. To ensure credibility of the study and to adhere to its ethical approval, participant confidentiality remained a priority throughout the research.

Chapter 4: Findings

The following chapter will discuss the findings of the study in relation to the research questions and overarching title of exploring the impact of place on a young person's participation in sport and physical activity in the North East of England. Three main themes will be highlighted. These were identified as part of the data analysis process, which included, Experience of The Local Area, Sport and Physical Activity in the Local Area and Influences on Sport and Physical Activity Participation. Each sub-section will analyse each focus group and interview individually to ensure each individuals contributions to the study can be explored in depth. Separating each participant and focus group in this chapter will allow for clear differentiation of opinions between the different roles of the interviewees and activity level of the young people. This structuring may also allow for easier comparison in subsequent parts of the thesis and the ability to identify areas of improvement within Wallsend and in wider communities.

The first theme to be discussed will be the young people's Experience of The Local Area. The feelings, opinions and experiences of all participants will be analysed in relation to Wallsend.

Experience of The Local Area

Focus Groups

Year 7 "active" girls

The first focus group conducted was with the "active" year 7 girls who were aged 11 to 12. To begin with, they were asked to share their opinions on Wallsend as a place and to explain their attitudes and emotions towards the local area and community. It was made clear to the participants that they did not have to relate their answers to sport and/or physical activity. All the girls lived in areas close by to each other, and had similar interests, which often involved playing sport and being outdoors. Amongst the participants, there developed a general sense of agreement when discussing this topic. To start with Louise began by describing the area as "*sketchy*" specifically "*around the houses when it gets late*". None of the female participants in this group showed any opposing feelings towards this comment. The overarching theme regarding their area in Wallsend was that it was unsafe. This was a recurring theme throughout discussion with all the

female participants in the study. The female participants in this group also came to their own conclusion that the lack of safety they felt did often discourage them from engaging with the physical environment and participating in sport and physical activity in outdoor spaces. To highlight this point further, Katie also stated that, "*Newcastle town centre is the worst*". The participants also commented that their parents would not let them outside of the house on their own, past a certain time after school, especially if they were going to be in a group of only girls. To expand on this, Louise shared that her dad, "*doesn't even trust like me and my Mum going to meet him if he's in town with my sister, we have to ask my uncle to take us and drive us to Newcastle.*" To understand the girls' perception of the area they were asked whether they had ever attended summer camps nearby to where they lived, to which Ella replied, "*I went to one once but I went home because it was scary*". Louise also shared that her mum does not trust some of the sport organised for young people her age in the area.

Participants in this group did share some positive experiences and feelings towards Wallsend. For example, Ella stated, "*It is fun though because there's like lots of soft plays and places to go swimming.*" It became clear that all the girls enjoyed participating in sport and physical activity in their local area outside of school hours and were keen to participate more. Most of the negative influences on their participation were related to factors outside of the young people's control, including the environment, their parents worry around safety and the activities available for their age group. They were all in agreement that they loved to play outside in their street and garden spaces, especially during the summer when the weather is nice. To understand in detail things that the participants thought the local area was lacking, they were asked to share their opinions on how the local area could be improved. The girls highlighted the few amounts of sport related activities available at their school, during break time and after school hours. They also discussed the need for a higher level of security such as CCTV cameras to increase the level of safety and their likelihood of using open spaces in Wallsend to engage with sport and physical activity. Finally, Katie shared, "*I think if I owned a sports facility I would get nets for volleyball, more different equipment and like more staff*", which highlights the lack of variation of sport and effectiveness of current activities. The girls did not refer to many other sports aside from football, which they would have to organise on their own. In summary, the year 7 "active" girls shared both positive and negative feelings towards Wallsend, highlighting things which could be improved to enhance their perception and engagement with the area and community.

Year 7 "non-active" girls

In the focus group conducted with year 7 "non-active" girls, many of the themes discussed by their "active" female peers were also raised. At the beginning of the discussion, the participants spoke quite negatively about their local area and how they often felt uncomfortable in the physical environment. Like the "active" year 7 girls, the participants in this group spoke about how unsafe they felt. They argued that some spaces are safer than others and some parts of Wallsend they would not go to on their own, or after a certain time of day. To expand on this finding, the girls were asked if they ever felt safe playing out in their local area after school on an evening, to which they all agreed that they did not. Rachel went on to explain, "*I feel really unsafe because my best friend lives really far away from us and I have to go there but then when I'm going home it's really dark and sometimes my mum can't pick me up because she's looking after the little ones so I have to walk home in the dark and it sometimes concerns us.*" This highlights young people's feelings around lack of safety and the affect it can have on their physical and social wellbeing. Ella also referred to a recent incident which occurred near to where she lives, sharing that, "*in my street… a man got stabbed there… and there was helicopters and police cars and they had to cut off some of the street*." To expand, she went on to share that she would sometimes go shopping in the centre of Wallsend, although there had recently been a lot of incidents. Sophie then went on to discuss a recent incident which she experienced: "*There was a period of time where people on my street had to stay in the house because there was this guy on the loose and he threw a machete in somebody's garden*". The comments made in relation to safety emphasise the overarching opinion of not feeling safe in the area, which all the female participants in this study held. Another factor which came up in conversation in relation to how they felt about the area, was the lack of maintenance of open spaces and the amount of litter they would find. They argued that this often discourages them from interacting with green spaces and negatively impacts their own and others' perception of Wallsend. As in the previous focus group with the "active" year 7 girls, they were asked how they thought the local area could be improved, to which all the participants agreed that there could be more outdoor facilities, such as parks, built in the area, which are specifically designed for secondary school pupils

Year 8 "non-active" boys

To begin the discussion with the "non-active" boys, aged 12 to 13, they were asked to share their opinions and attitudes of the local area of Wallsend. They began by talking about the amount of green space available and how important it was to them in relation to their physical and mental health. However, there were mixed opinions amongst the group regarding their access to green space. For example, Jack started by stating that in the area where he lives, "*it is very open, not as enclosed, there are not many buildings around, it's light and refreshing*". However, the other boys argued that they would have to walk quite far to get to any open green space which they could enjoy. For example, Alex shared, "*my area doesn't really have any green space, I have to walk about a mile to get to the nearest park.*" He did not find this very convenient when wanting to exercise or just to get some fresh air outside during his free time after school. Whilst the participants engaged with the mapping activity, they went on to talk about the number of built-up areas within Wallsend and how it can make them feel very overwhelmed and less positive about being outside. Jack argued that Wallsend actually, "*has few nice areas which are genuinely really decent.*" This supports the narrative shared by a few of the female participants, who argued that some parts of Wallsend they considered to be ok, whereas other parts they would be unlikely to visit. Alex stated, "*It feels like the middle of the city but you are not in the city… except for Wallsend Park which is amazing, it's massive, there is no green space for ages.*" As the discussion continued, the participants in this group all agreed that they would rather be outside than inside, as this was better for their mental and physical health. However, the lack of green space near to where they lived, would often prevent them from engaging with the physical environment on a regular basis. To expand, Alex commented on the facilities available, "*there are barely any sports centres anywhere… there are no sports clubs out of school.*" From this conversation, it can be surmised that the young people in this focus group felt that there are currently insufficient facilities, both indoor and outdoor to support their sport and physical activity participation and interaction with the local area.

Alex then went on to consider the lack of opportunities on offer for those younger than him. He shared that he would like to see an increased number of activities available for young people who may not have already been given the chance to get involved in sport. As mentioned by the "non-active" female participants, he also added that there was a current lack of variety of sports in the area. He argued, "*I would like to be able to play football, basketball, rugby, probably not that*

because I would get injured. But it would be better if there were more sports activities in the area…[there are] no outdoor, no indoor, no nothing."

Like the female participants, the boys in this focus group also spoke about how unsafe they perceived Wallsend to be. They shared that they often felt uncomfortable going into different parts of the area alone and at certain times of the day. All the boys agreed that they would be unlikely to go into the centre of Wallsend by themselves. They shared that they were often discouraged by the types of people that might be there. Within this discussion, Kyle stated that it would be dangerous to go into the local area alone and Jack added that, "*going by yourself is a no go until you are 18.*" In summary, the male participants shared a variety of perceptions about the local area and were able to suggest multiple ways in which it could be improved to increase their engagement with the community and outdoor space.

Year 9 "active" boys

The final focus group to be conducted was with "active" male participants in year 9, aged 13 to 14. The boys in this group shared little information about the local area in comparison to their younger peers. However, like the other young people in the study, they stated that some parts of Wallsend could be, "*quite dodgy*" and that they themselves and other people their age, would be less likely to use these types of spaces. How unsafe the participants felt in the area has been a recurring theme throughout all of the four focus groups. They also perceived the area as poorly maintained and looked after. For example, some of the participants in this group referred to the amount of litter and lack of maintenance and age appropriateness of the park facilities. Therefore, it could be suggested that there is a need for existing facilities to be properly maintained and new outdoor facilities to be built, which are appropriate for young people in secondary school.

Interviews

Physical Education Staff Member

To begin the interview with the Physical Education Staff Member, Jess, she was asked to offer her opinions and experiences of Wallsend, as well as how she perceived the students' feelings

towards the local area. The interviewee was not from Wallsend and so spoke about her experiences when passing through the area and when coming into work. She started the conversation by expressing her awareness of the negative reputation Wallsend sometimes has. She commented:

> "*I think doing these focus groups with you, has kind of opened my eyes a bit more about what I knew, it didn't have the best name from things I've heard and doing our staff CPDs, but some of the things the kids have said I was really surprised about that they couldn't even like go out to the park without feeling unsafe , so yes I had heard about its reputation but then hearing this really puts it into perspective.*"

From this it may be inferred that people who live outside of Wallsend view the area as unsafe and potentially not somewhere they would like to visit due to the things that they have heard. Her perception of the local area aligned with all the focus groups' participants.

Wallsend Innovation Officer

As with Jess, the interview began by asking the interviewee, Doreen, to provide an in-depth description of the area, drawing on her opinions and experiences, as well as how she perceived the young people she worked with, feelings towards Wallsend as a place. Doreen was brought up in the area and so was able to give a detailed description. To start with, she talked about the patterns of behaviour she had seen in the Wallsend community and how these may often be looked down on by others living elsewhere. She explained that, as part of her job, she has had the opportunity to speak to some residents regarding their upbringing and time spent in Wallsend. She expanded on her findings in the following statement:

> "*To sum up the community, once you are there people tend not to leave and if they do, then what we have found through our research within Wallsend's children's community, that people tend to, if you do move out of the area if you go to university or for work when you have a family, you tend to move back, and what we have found is, the reason for that, is because people want that informal child care for bringing up their children. It is often looked down on that people can't afford childcare or nursery, it is not that they can't afford it, it is that they choose that informal*

[childcare], that is really important to people".

It became clear, in the early stage of the interview, that if people were to move out of Wallsend as they grew up, they would not move far and would still have various connections with the town. This may be through their family or because they still liked to come back and visit the area. She also described Wallsend to be 4 miles from Newcastle city centre, and 4 miles from Tynemouth, the beach. This is something a lot of people enjoy about living in the area, that they are so close to everything. Other positive factors which she talked about, included the commuting space and the facilities available. For example, Doreen highlighted the efficient use of the Metro and bus services, as well as leisure centres, swimming pools, libraries and parks. However, she did also speak about the level of deprivation in and around Wallsend, despite there being "*lots of reasons to live there*" and some very affluent parts:

> "*There are pockets of deprivation… it has got one of the highest deprived wards in North Tyneside… some of our schools and the community around that school, could be in a high deprivation area and you might have another one a mile away that isn't.*"

Doreen went on to describe her perceived sense of community spirit in Wallsend, by arguing that the schools in the area bring a sense of togetherness because of the "Wallsend Schools Partnerships", where all the schools' headteachers meet every half term with herself. She commented:

> "*I don't know any other area where the headteachers gather like that…which shows that there is a willingness to work together.*"

Football Coach

To begin discussion with the Football Coach, Paul, he was asked to describe Wallsend and how he thinks the young people at the club perceive the area. Having lived and worked in the area for a few years, he was able to provide an in-depth overview of the area, stating:

> "*Wallsend has history in terms of ships, wet docks, dry docks. At the moment I would say it is quite a, not empty, but what I would class as a typical traditional high street now. It has lost a lot of character and lost a lot of history. It's much like your bog*

standard, lots of takeaways on the high street. There's no banks anymore, so all of those things that people rely on are gone, people who can't travel who don't have cars. The place to live is a mix really because you've got pockets of deprivation especially around the high street and down towards the river side and where the shipyards are but also not far from where we are and we are classed as what's called Northumberland ward you've got areas of quite affluent nice houses, nice schools, nice parks. I think if you said to someone who knows Wallsend I don't think they would talk about that, they would talk about the grey and grim parts and I know that not so recent but in the last 2 years it is quite a transient community, there's not people that actually stay here due to the standard of living or what's on offer but there isn't really a sense of community."

As way of expanding on this and to discover more of Wallsend as a place, Paul was asked to talk in more detail about the sense of community in the area, and to what extent he thought people had a strong sense of belonging. It became clear that there are potentially mixed feelings and opinions amongst those who live in the area, which may depend on how long people have lived there and what their interests/needs are: He explained:

"I think there will be [a sense of community] but that is in the sort of traditional community that are happy in Wallsend and have lived in Wallsend for a long period of time. For example, this weekend coming there is the Wallsend Festival. I would imagine Wallsend Boys Club as a reputable name which would have been invited to those types of events, to support or put on an activity, but I don't get the sense of where this community joins up or all links in with each other, but there is lots of organisations doing things in Wallsend but not necessarily in a joined up approach."

This demonstrates a lack of connection between different groups in the community, and more work could be done to interlink the types of initiatives already in place. He also commented on the level of anti-social behaviour among young people:

"I don't see a lot of anti-social behaviour but then you hear about a lot of it being reported. I understand the park is a hot spot for young people to gather round, there is a skate park there, which is a fantastic park by the way it is really good, but I think it could be utilised more. There is a lovely hut in there where there used to be a youth session delivered in there, but a young person smashed a window and then that was

> *it nobody was allowed back in*
>
> *there. And I think it's just probably building trust and shifting attitudes of those*
>
> *people who are in power or to have a say on what goes on."*

It became apparent that more could be done to promote and engage young people in the area to utilise the space Wallsend has to offer and as way of bringing young people together. He also indicated that activities needed to be more age appropriate, to grab young people's attention and avoid disengagement over time. Within this discussion, Paul also commented on the work the football club does with local primary schools. He said that there was a lack of sporting facilities to enable young people to participate in football tournaments against other schools in the area and create that sense of community even more.

Sport and Physical Activity in the Local Area

Year 7 "active" girls

As discussion continued, the year 7 "active" girls were asked specific questions about their sport and physical activity participation, covering topics such as what they liked most about these activities and how far they travelled to get to them. During this part of the focus groups, one of the girls, Katie, explained that she had not always lived in Wallsend and still had sporting commitments in the area she previously lived. For example, she still played for a local football team which meant one of her parents had to travel with her so she was able to get to the training ground. Even though it is quite far, her family are willing to take her to ensure she carries on playing and enjoying the sport. She went on to share that, "*a year ago my mum moved us to here because she used to live here and like I still go and see my dad and I still like the team because I have been playing for them for years.*" Katie also explained that it is a mixed gendered team, as opposed to many teams in Wallsend, which are either girls' teams or boys' teams. She argued that playing in a mixed team brings more physical challenges and ensures progression of her football skills, which is the main reason she continues to play for them, despite it involving more travel time.

Throughout the focus group the girls often referred to, and discussed, the upcoming school football trip to Barcelona. They talked about this trip in a positive way and were excited to go. Katie went on to say that "*I should make a group chat for all of the girls that are going to Barca and we should have training sessions... you should see the amount of people that went to football yesterday because of Barcelona now*." The participants' enthusiasm for sport, even throughout some of the early conversations in the focus group, highlighted their enjoyment and motivation to participate in sport and physical activity both inside and outside of school. When speaking about the types of sports they engaged with, the female participants highlighted the various sports they often take part in during P.E lessons. These included: cross country, badminton, dance and futsal, all of which they had positive experiences of. Outside of school, when asked if they played in their local area, the girls shared that they would often meet up together to play sport, which is one of their main motivations for staying active. However, it has become harder for Jessica to do this as she had recently moved further away and so they have all had to start meeting up in different locations, which made it more difficult. Ella also stated that most of the physical activity she did outside of school was with her dad when they go to the gym. She also went on to mention the amount of time she spends outside on her bike: "*I love my bike, I take my bike everywhere.*" In this first exercise of the focus group, the overarching feeling from the girls was positive and enthusiastic and they enjoyed participating in as much, and as many different sports and forms of physical activity as possible.

Once the participants had finished drawing their maps, they spoke individually to the group, sharing the types of sport and physical activity they participated in, how they travelled to the activity and their enjoyment levels scored 1 to 10. To start, Louise shared that one of her preferred activities in the local area was football. This was because she could easily play it with her dad and brother on the field just next to her house, highlighting the importance of an activity's accessibility and not having to travel to engage in it. She then went on to talk about another activity she enjoyed which was swimming and that there is an indoor pool in the local area which she felt is very easy to get to. However, she did not go as often as she would have liked to as she only enjoyed it when her friends were also able to go.

Similarly, Ella also explained the easy access to football pitches in the area which are near to where she lives. She shared that she will often go on her bike to the local pitches and play with her friends. This finding supports the narrative and importance of accessible, local space for

young people to participate in sport with others their own age. All the participants agreed that they were able to play football whenever they wanted as there are many football pitches in the local area, which are free to access and located next to their old primary school, which is, "*just round the corner*" from where Louise and others live. Katie then went on to talk in more depth about a local girls' football team she had recently joined. Within this discussion, she explained that she had always been a big football fan and enjoys going to watch matches at Liverpool Football Club in Anfield, even though it does involve quite a lot of travelling. She also talked about her enthusiasm for swimming, saying that "*my Dad and step Mum take me swimming and now I'm old enough we go in the sauna and steam room*." It was clear from Katies explanation of the different types of sport and physical activity she participates in that she is regularly engaging with physical exercise in the area and has a clear passion for football as well as other sports inside and outside of school. Like her peers, she values easy access to sport and physical activity but is also willing to travel to activities she is really interested in.

Jessica went on to discuss her enjoyment of football and how her dad would often take her swimming, and also to the beach to go surfing. She has also joined the Army Cadets, where they often incorporate sport and physical activity into the sessions.

Overall, the local area was described as a place where the "active" year 7 girls felt like they could participate in sport and physical activity both with family and friends, in a range of activities. They all concluded that many people their age spend most of their free time, outside of school hours, in local green spaces such as, "*Denby Park.*" However, as previously discussed, when describing their feelings towards Wallsend they reiterated that at certain times of the day and evening, and in parts of Wallsend they would feel less safe to do so.

Year 7 "active" girl's map

59
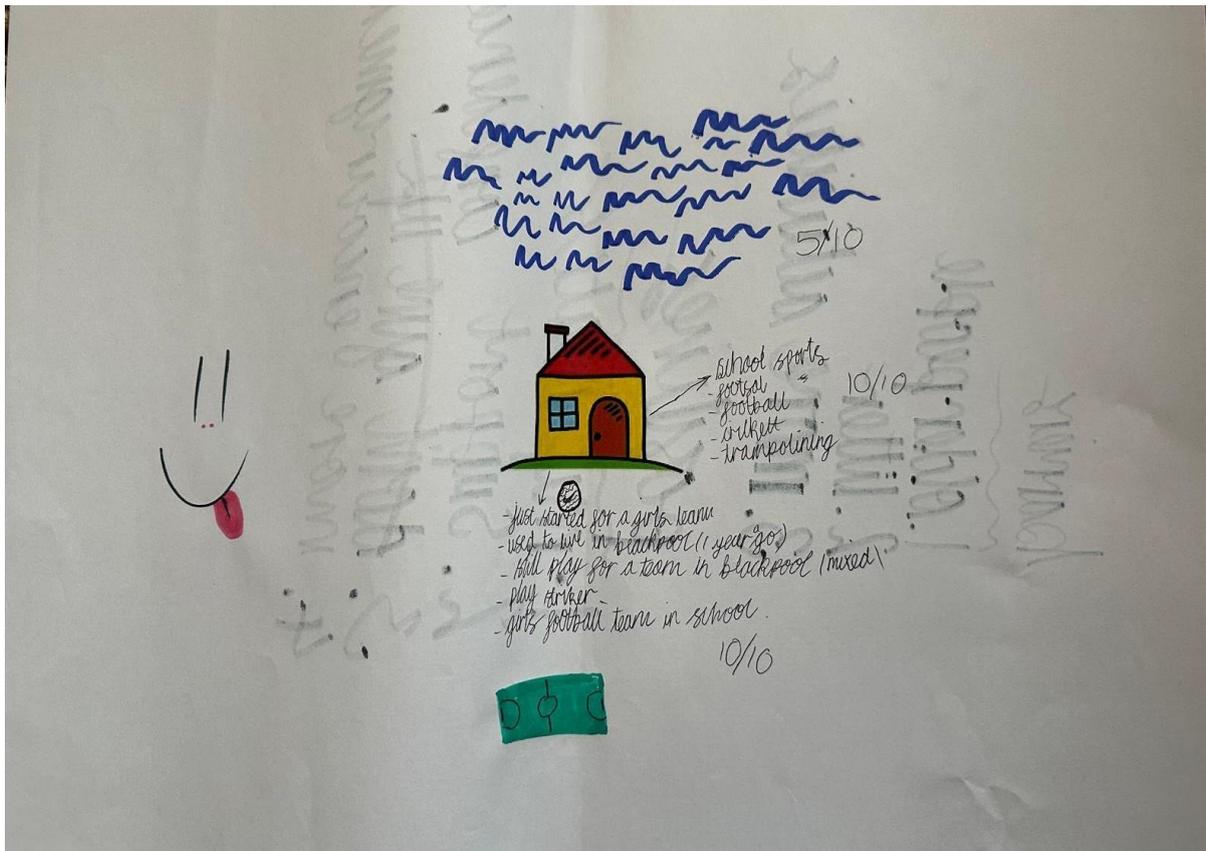
Year 7 "non-active" girls

To begin the focus group with the "non-active" year 7 girls, the participants were asked to share the sports and activities they most frequently participated in. Rachael started by saying that she engaged in two sports, dance and karate, on a regular basis outside of school. However, Sophie said that she did not often participate in any type of activity outside of school, but if she was out with her friends she would occasionally play dodgeball or gymnastics. Similarly, Mary shared that she did not take part in any clubs, but enjoys playing dodgeball, basketball or going on bike rides. Finally, Ella said that she would often attend basketball club, which is one of her favourite sports, as well as going swimming on a regular basis at Burnside Leisure Centre in Wallsend. After this initial discussion, the participants began to engage with the mapping activity. Whilst drawing, Rachael talked through some of her ideas. To prompt her thinking she was asked if there were any after school clubs that she attended and particularly enjoyed. She replied by saying that

she enjoyed going to art club and that she prefers this to after school sport. However, she made it clear that she does like to go outside during break time and tries to walk to school when she can. Sophie went on to discuss her previous participation in a local football club, which she left because she stopped enjoying it. She now goes swimming twice a week with her friends and sometimes plays tennis. It was clear that the social aspect of sport was important to Sophie, as with many of the other focus group participants. When talking about her interaction with outdoor spaces, she said that she often goes to local parks with her friends, although, "*we don't really do sports when we go to the park, we just hang out.*" Like Sophie, Ella also mentioned her enjoyment of swimming and playing outside on her bike. She said she often went to Howden Park, in Wallsend, with her friends and liked to play on the trampoline with her friends in their gardens. Mary then went on to mention that trampolining was one of her favourite sports to do in P.E, as well as dodgeball which she really enjoyed. She also talked about how she would go to the local park with her friends, which is only two minutes away from her house. She stated, "*we would all go to the field, and it was just so fun it was like the whole street was there, it was like 10 or 15 people in total and I would always take my little brother with us because it's really close.*" However, she then went on to discuss the lack of appropriate equipment for young people her age: "*In the park they have taken some stuff off and have left the baby swings and the kid type stuff, but me and my friends still go on the baby swings.*" To understand the outdoor space in Wallsend in more detail and how it may influence young people's participation in sport and physical activity, they were asked if they thought there were enough free facilities and activities to engage with in the area. Mary replied, "*Yeah and there is this little gym on your way out of Wallsend Park and it has got like loads of exciting stuff.*" Some of the main reasons the girls did not play out was because of the weather and if their friends were not available.

Year 7 "non-active" girls map
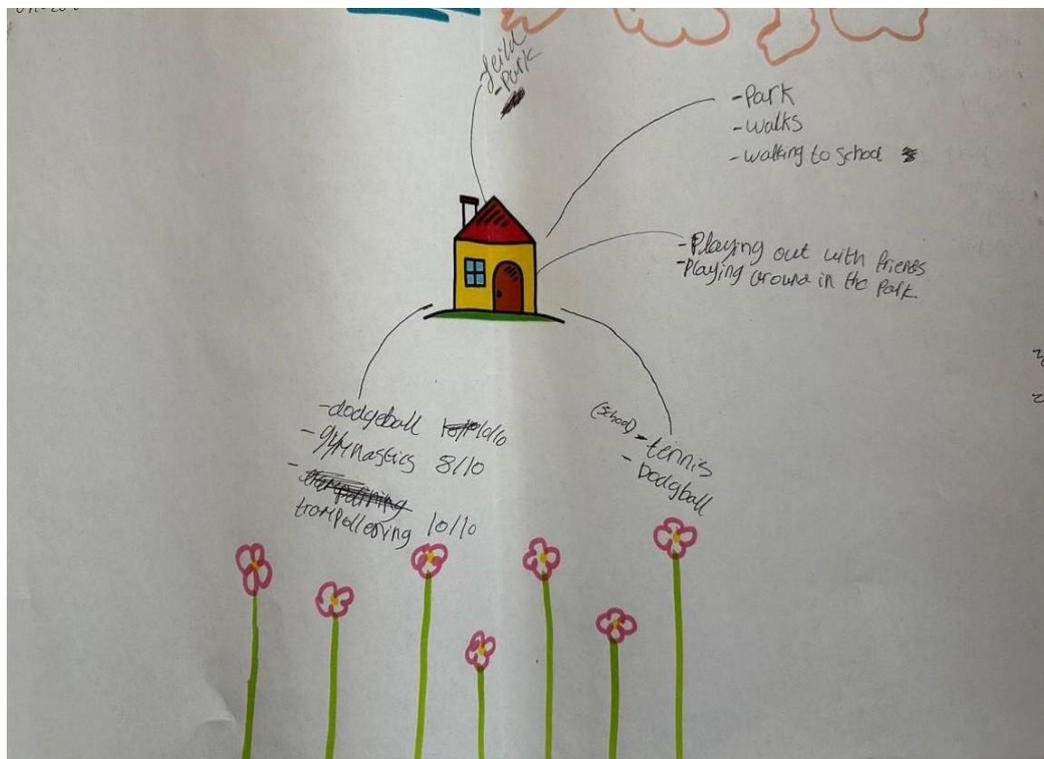
Year 8 "non-active" boys

To begin discussion with the "non-active" year 8 boys, they were asked if they currently participate in any organised sporting activities. Jack was the first to reply, sharing that he had not taken part in any sport at all over the last couple of years. He went on to say that when he was younger, he was often very active, but his sport and physical activity levels had decreased as he had got older and moved from primary school up to high school: "*yeah when I was younger I was very active but slowed down over the past couple of years.*" Alex also shared similar opinions; apart from P.E, he participated in no sport or organised physical activity out of school hours. He said, "*I do go-karting, I do that sometimes, but no clubs or anything like that.*" In response to this question, Sam was the only participate in this focus group to mention taking part in any specific sporting activity, tennis, although like the others this was mainly in school hours. To summarise the discussion, the participants were asked, "*so you would all say that you mainly just participate*

in sport inside of school?" to which all of them replied, "*yes*."

The next part of the focus group involved the mapping activity. Like with the other groups, the participants drew the types of sport and physical activity they currently participated in, how they travel to it, how frequently they took part and how much they enjoyed doing it scored 1 to 10. To begin, Jack mentioned that he walked to school every day, whereas Alex stated: "*I usually take the car to school which is probably a negative but at break time I'm always outside doing something and*

I occasionally go and watch the women's football with my friends and we play football in P.E." Jack also spoke of the amount of P.E they participate in and some exercise he did outside of school: "*I do PE for around an hour every Thursday and Tuesday, around a 6/10, not that enjoyable. I walk my dog a couple times every month, it takes around 40 minutes and my sister takes us, 7/10. Weightlifting about an hour, I do it alone 4-5 times a week, it's a ten out of ten it makes me feel great.*" Within this discussion, the focus group talked more in depth about how they felt about P.E and whether this was the most intense or only form of physical activity they participated in on a regular basis. Again, Jack initiated discussion saying that, "*it is very exhausting, it takes a lot out of me… it is very rarely outdoor, most of the time it is indoor.*" As well as P.E, the participants spoke about the different activities they would take part in during break times at school. Like many of the girls in year 7, they enjoyed participating in football at school. For example, Alex shared, "*In school I do football at lunch pretty much every single day… I do P.E… [where] we do things such as tennis, cricket and*

basketball. When I've got free time outside of school I will sometimes go on walks because it is very refreshing." When asked specifically about the local area's facilities and the types of green space available, Kyle discussed going to the park, even though it is an hours travel away, and using the local swimming pool. The participants were all in agreement that they would participate in sport during school but not as often outside of school.

As most of the participants were currently participating in very little sport or physical activity outside of school hours, they were asked to share their opinions on whether they would like to see any improvements to the facilities in the local area, and if they would like any sports to become more accessible to them. All the boys were in agreement that they did not want any other sports available. Jack argued that the weights he used at home were sufficient for him, although Kyle did state, "I *would prefer there to be more sports activities, not particularly for me, but for*

younger children to have the chance to get into sports. It would be better if there were sports in the area." He went on to discuss the lack of opportunity there is to get involved in sports clubs at school. The participants felt that if you were not a certain level of ability, then you would not get picked to play. Kyle argued, it was mainly the students in the older years who were chosen to represent the school's sports teams.

Jack then went on to talk about his engagement with green space close to where he lives, as a way of improving his mental health. He referred to the Covid-19 lockdown when he started to feel as though he was gaining weight, and his mental health was deteriorating. He said for example, "*some days I couldn't get out of bed and the moment lockdown ended I got outside in green space, lovely, and I instantly felt uplifted.*"

To understand more about Wallsend as a place, and how young people interacted with it, they were asked to share the things they did in their free time, outside of school. The participants were mostly in agreement that they preferred to stay indoors, saying that as they had got older, they had less energy to participate in physical activity.

Year 8 "non-active" boys map

Handwritten annotations on drawing:
- rare walks usually around Town
- punching bag in my room
- occasionally go to watch tnt women's football with friends
- car to school
- At breaktime always outside.
- football in school with friends hard on teams (could be positive or negative)
- 8/10
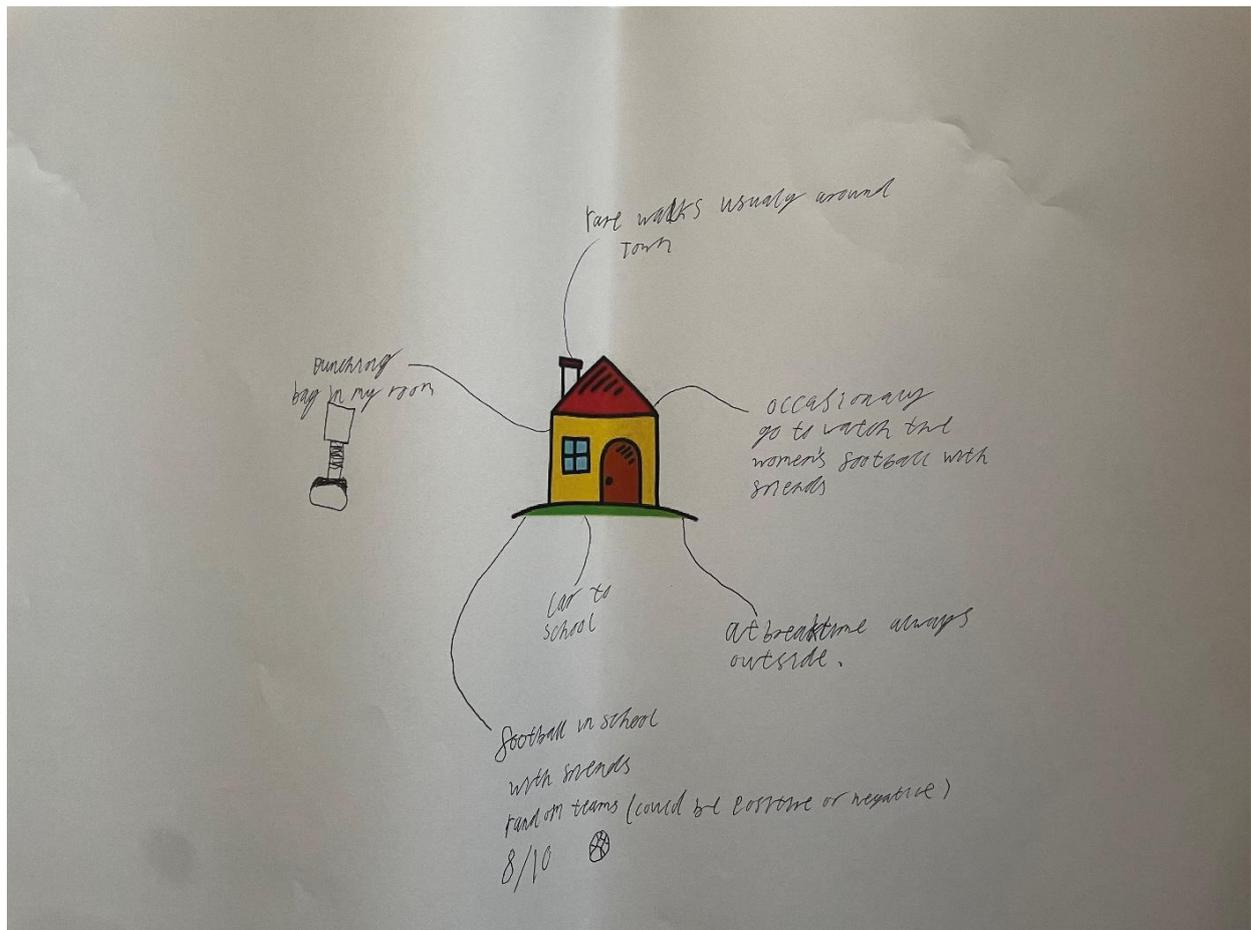
Year 9 "active" boys

Throughout the focus group with the "active" year 9 boys, all of them were able to refer to, and speak confidently about the different types of sport and physical activity they engaged with. Liam started by sharing that the sport he most frequently participated in was boxing which took place in Gateshead, a nearby town. The rest of the participants all talked about their participation in football, and they all played for a local team, as well as the school's team, on a weekly basis. In comparison to the other focus groups in the study, the participants in this group were less open and forthcoming and so the mapping activity acted as a prompt to a more in-depth discussion. To explain the diagrams, they had drawn on their maps, Jude began by sharing: "*I've put football, gym and school down. I probably enjoy football the most I just love doing it because it makes me happy and everything, it's just one of my favourite sports.*" The gym he used was in North

Shields, which his dad would drive him to, or if his dad wasn't available, he would get the bus to. Like Jude, Lucas also talked about his use of the gym, although he preferred to play sport, especially football which he had played at a local venue from a young age, and it was easy to get to. Joe went on to talk about using his bike in the local area and how he will often play out with friends: "*I go all the way down Tynemouth because my football mates are down there.*" The participants in this focus group were happy with the amount of sport and physical activity they were currently participating in and felt that there were sufficient facilities and opportunities for them to get involved in to meet the government recommended guidelines for MVPA.

Year 9 "active" boys Map
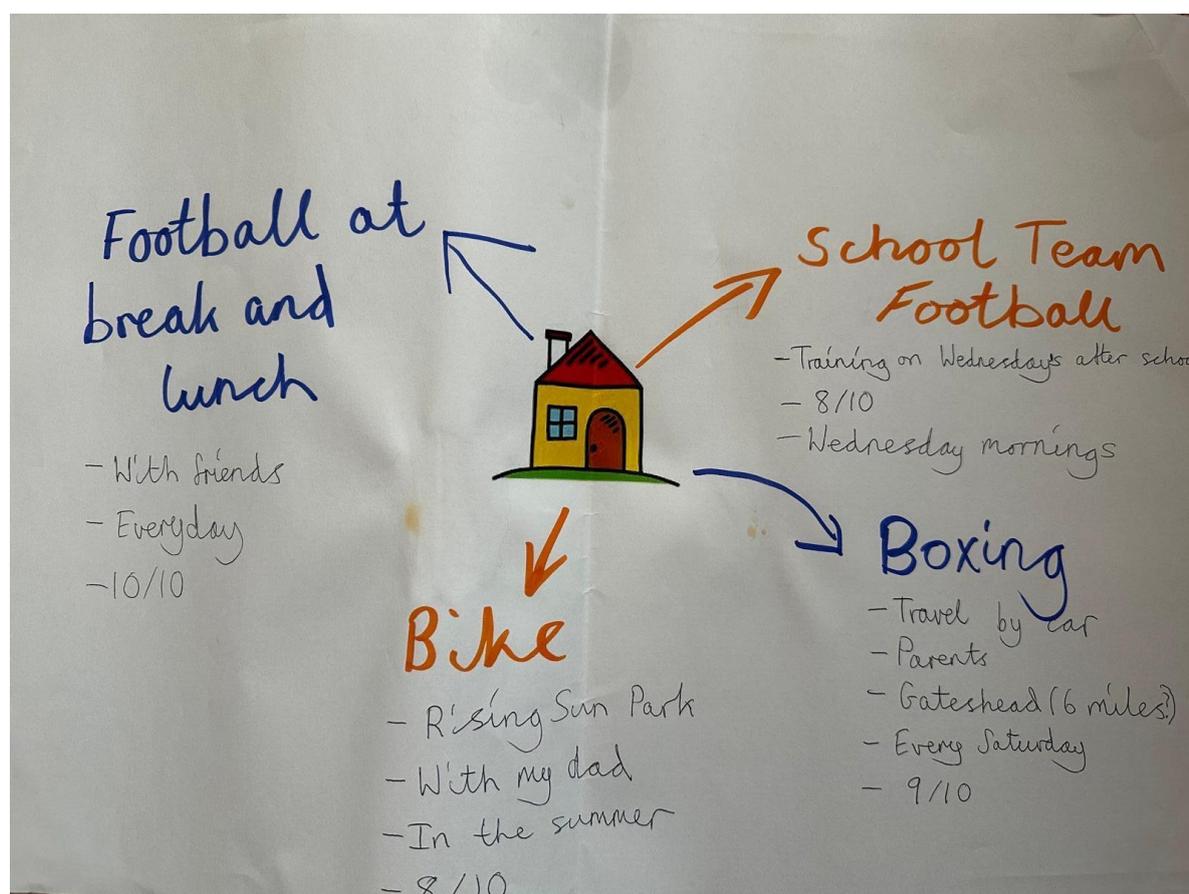
Interviews

Physical Education Staff Member

To understand Jess' knowledge and perception of young people's participation in sport and physical activity in Wallsend, she was asked to explain her opinions on the sense of community in the area around sport and physical activity, and whether she thought that people were encouraged in this. She explained in the following statement:

> "*I'm not actually from Wallsend so I don't know the area that well that isn't around the school but when we go to other schools to do the extracurricular it's always like ran really well like the central venues and there is a good sense of like community when I take some of the football girls over they will know people from other teams so they have friendships with them.*"

This comment highlights the opportunity for young females to engage with sport outside of the school day and interact with people of a similar age through sport and physical activity in the local area. To go into more depth, Jess was asked how often she would see young people playing outside in the local area. She explained:

> "*I don't see many to be honest, I think most of the sport that a lot of the kids do will be at either, like the school clubs or I know a lot of them the girls and the boys do a lot of after school football and netball. But there were a few girls asking at netball club last term if I knew of any netball clubs because they were looking to find one and I think they were struggling to find one. The ones who come to extra-curricular, are the ones I see the most, I think that they will because they come to quite a few of extra-curricular, so they come to rounders, netball and the football as well. And I think a lot of them play outside of school as well, so I think they will but I do think that there will be a massive chunk that don't who will just go to school and go home again.*"

Wallsend Innovation Officer

When discussing young people's physical activity rates, Doreen began by suggesting that many

of the young people who live in the area may feel as though they are labelled as either 'good at sport' or 'not good at sport'. She explained that this can be discouraging to those who often fall into the category as 'not good at sport' creating a vicious circle and consequently there is a proportion of young people who are participating less and less. As part of her role, she aims to reduce stereotyping and provide all young people with activities they will enjoy and which encourage them to participate in, and keep on participating in. She explains how she does this in the following statement:

"*We run a family fun Friday in the park over the holidays where the whole family can come along, and we can get everybody involved like a game of rounders or some kind of team game.*"

It became clear that there are already some initiatives being put into place to increase participation rates among targeted groups in the community. As Doreen reiterated throughout the interview, there is something for all ages and abilities giving people the opportunity to interact with others in their area, bringing people together, as well as increasing their physical activity levels. Within this discussion, she commented on the preferred type of activities that young people want to engage with, especially those in the later years of primary school and early years of secondary school. For example, in her previous research she found that, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, children aged 10 to 11 were often given the impression by the adults in their lives that they had to stop 'playing'. Doreen highlights that this message was not always communicated directly to the young people but was implied by their teachers and parents who discourage them from 'playing', as they used to in primary school.

However, many young people in their early years of secondary school still want to engage with play and so they are missing out on this time spent active, due to an expectation for them to grow up. Doreen argued that parents and teachers need to be informed on the importance of play and told to encourage this type of behaviour amongst young people, even during their secondary school years. She explains this point further in the following statement:

> "*looking out over the fields at break times, when they first start in year 7, in the first couple of weeks they are running everywhere and then it stops and the boys will run if they have got a ball and they usually do, so they will be playing football, rugby or basketball but the girls will just be sitting on the grass watching or standing around in a group…so I think there becomes a gender difference as well*".

Gender was also highlighted as an influencing factor on young people's participation by Doreen. She made it clear that through her varying roles in the community, she will often see a difference in sport and physical activity related behaviours amongst male and female young people. Most commonly in that girls participate less. She went on to state that school is where most young people engage with sport and physical activity, during physical education lessons, at break time and after school clubs:

> *"We have got a few community centres who are running things and there is a want to do more, especially after covid I think everybody realises that everything stopped and we need to get it back going again… but I think at the moment if your parents don't take you to something you tend to not go. There is a sports centre, it is a local authority ran one and it is located next to Burnside school, it has a swimming pool and things in but there is a bit of a stigma about body image we have found, especially with mothers not wanting to go*
> *swimming… so then the children miss out. Quite often if you went there on a Sunday, it is mostly dads and so the mums are there but they are sitting at the side. So, I think there is something about that as well not having the right clothes to go to a gym".*

Football Coach

During the interview with the Football Coach, Paul, he was asked to provide an insight into the types of equipment and facilities available in Wallsend, especially in outdoor spaces, and whether he thought this may be impacting current physical activity levels amongst young people. He went on to explain:

> *"At the moment I don't think there is that sort of joined up approach that is happening. I think in the Northeast itself I think football is the main sort of sport and the most popular but you've also got to understand that not everybody likes football and again when we create the hub… we are trying to provide different types of activities for young people who aren't sort of interested in competitive sport or competitive football."*

He also highlighted the rugby club, swimming pools, badminton courts, table tennis facilities

and access to leisure centres available in and around the area of Wallsend. However, he was not confident about the promotion and marketing of these facilities and the activities on offer, amongst young people and their parents. Paul argued that there should be an increase in the amount, and the awareness of, informal sport and physical activity in the area, allowing young people to "drop in" so they did not have to subscribe to a type of membership in order participate.

To understand how much sport and physical activity young people in Wallsend are participating in on a weekly basis, and to what extent Wallsend as a place has an impact, Paul was then asked whether he thought young people in the community were meeting the government recommended guidelines for times spent active per day. He explained the following:

> "*We have about two or three touch points with our young people a week. So being active with us two or three hours a week…but then outside of that if you are a member outside of that like hockey or netball I think we will have a mix of members that do that but I think that will come down to cost. I know with them types of activities [swimming] you have to block book for eight weeks or six weeks, six or eight quid which might be quite a chunk of money for someone to fork that out at one time… I think gymnastics top trumps them all because I think that is really expensive.*"

Paul provided an in-depth analysis of the participation rates and demographic of the club, stating that there are many people who travel to attend the sessions. He argued that the club's reputation for producing high level players attracts many peoples outside of the local area, which has made the club more diverse. He summaries this point in the following: "*We are getting even more diverse, which is great, it's what we want, we want the club to represent its local community… it's important that we continue to be accessible and friendly when new people are arriving.*" Within this discussion, he argued that the club caters for more than just one audience. The coaches ensure that there are a range of activities available for varying ages and abilities, and they do not just deliver traditional 11-aside football. For example, the club currently offers recreational disability and women and girl only sessions to make the club more accessible and welcoming to the wider community. He stated:

> *"If people aren't keen to be a part of a team, then they can just come and play football and socialise."*

He made it clear that the club does not just value the performance aspect of football, that they also focus on increasing participation levels. He described some of the offerings in the following statement:

> *"We have got a facility and ultimately we want people to use it… we have got refugee sessions… this morning out on the 3G we have got a disability group, they come every other month and do a big tournament and it is accessible for all people, it tends to be adults who have some form of disability but it could be…a mental health concern or it could be a physical disability as well so that everyone is catered for. We had thirteen girls' teams last season, and we are potentially going to have fifteen this season. For those young people who are on free school meals we provide a four-day, five hour a day, sports day camp here, again breaking down the barriers of [people thinking] Wallsend Boys Club isn't just about being good or rich, it is for everybody. There is a programme coming up in the holidays which usually attracts about 50 to 60 kids each week."*

Influences on Participation in Sport and Physical Activity in The Local Area

Year 7 "active" girls

The final part of the focus groups concentrated on the things that young people felt were influences on their activity levels, in both a positive and negative way, things they perceived as barriers and facilitators. To prompt discussion, the year 7 "active" girls were asked whether there were any activities or facilities that they would like to be more accessible in the area. To begin, Sophie argued that she would like the opportunity to play a wider variety of sports, including volleyball and tennis and not just football. All the participants in this group were in agreement that certain sports were not easily available to them due to the price of the equipment needed to play and they gave the example of tennis. Sophie highlighted the ease of access to football, stating: *"There is a community centre next to the park and there is a grass bit next to it and we all just get our coats and bags and just make nets."* To support this Ella also mentioned: *"There's a*

football pitch at Langdale and then there's one at Burnside and you have to pay like a pound to get into the pitches and for the rest of the day you can just be there." When asked specifically about what types of factors helped them to play sport, Jess' first response was her parents, who have always encouraged her to keep active. She stated: "*My Dad did football when he was younger, he did rugby when he was younger and then he also did tennis when he was younger and so my dad encouraged me.*" The participants in this group were all in agreement that their families played a big part in their sporting participation. For example, Ella also spoke about her grandmother, sharing: "*My nana has always been there for me and my dad as well… my nana is always there for me she's always like oh why don't you do this and go play out…she's always been my number one supporter other than my mate and my dad.*" When discussing the types of barriers to their participation the girls argued that their male peers would often bully them for playing football. They also spoke about the financial cost of sports and Jess shared that her dad would always complain about buying football boots as, "*they are too expensive*". Mary agreed, stating that the price of football boots should be lowered to allow more people to participate in the sport and reduce the number of barriers people in the community may face. To understand the severity of the influence they had discussed, they were asked to highlight the three main barriers and facilitators on their sport and physical participation.

Barriers:

- The use of mobile phones amongst young people. That they were spending too much time on them rather than taking part in physical activities.
- Lack of maintenance of facilities and outdoor spaces
- The presence of gangs and older young people which made them feel less safe

They began by arguing that a lot of people their age would rather use their mobile phones than play outside in the local area:

Ella: "*We should put down our mobile phones more because people always have them and then just get distracted by them*"

Mary: "*She looked at me when she said that.*"

Ella: "*Because you always carry your phone around when we are doing football.*" Mary: "*I actually haven't done that for the last few weeks, I'm proud of myself.*"

The participants also commented on the amount of litter in the area and how some facilities were not well maintained or appropriate for their age group to use. For example, they explained that when trying to play on some of the local football pitches, there was too much litter in the way for them to properly use outdoor green spaces and parks. The lack of organised sporting activities in the area was also mentioned in this discussion. The participants expressed that they always have to arrange their own activities and would prefer to be able to engage with more communal based sessions, with other young people their age, in a safer environment.

Facilitators:

- Friends and family support
- Participation of friends
- Confidence

To begin the discussion around the types of factors which helped them to engage with sport and physical activity, Jess shared that: "The *positives are my mates, because they are always encourage me to do everything, like if I'd do something I shouldn't really be doing, they go alright you just need to put your head up.*" All the participants agreed that their friends were their main support and helped to boost their confidence when exercising. The participants also explained how their confidence can be impact:

Mary: *"Especially in sports when people comment on the way they are playing"*

Jess: *"And especially because we are girls because the boys usually do it. It really made me feel more confident because you know the girls Euros and they won it, it's always like oh the boys are going to win"*

They also commented on the lack of attention surrounding women's football in general, arguing that the money and coverage is not equal to men's football.

Year 7 "non-active" girls

In the focus group with the year 7 "non-active" girls, similar topics were discussed as with the

year 7 "active" girls around factors they thought influenced their participation in sport and physical activity. For example, the participants also commented on the lack of appropriate and well-kept equipment available for them to use in the local outdoor spaces. Amelia began by sharing:

"In the park opposite mine it was really good and loads of people would either be on the field or be on the park in the summer and in the 6 week holidays we would stay out till late and we would just be out in the street and stuff but they've took some of the stuff, like we used to have a zip line…so much about it has changed like the zip line like obviously we love the zip line and the swings they have took them off even though there were only just a few."

To prompt discussion, the participants were asked whether they thought there were enough facilities in the area allowing them to participate in sufficient amounts of physical activity and meet the government's recommended guidelines. All participants agreed that there could be more facilities close by to where they lived. For example, Olivia explained that she had to travel in order to use a gym: "*You can go to Burnside, but if you want to go to the gym there, there has to be an adult with you…personally I would rather go to the park with my friends.*" Safety was the most frequent discussion topic in this section of the focus group, in relation to why they were not participating in sport and physical activity in the local area. For example, many of the girls' parents do not allow them to play outside after a certain time of day. Rachael also explained why she had recently stopped participating in after school sports, such as basketball: "*I used to go with my friends but then they stopped going and it was just year 11 boys, and I didn't want to do it with just boys.*" Another barrier highlighted was the perceived attitude of older people in the local area. The participants explained that they would sometimes feel as though people living nearby did not like them to play near their houses, especially ball games. Jess explained that: "*I think what stops you is the place being restricted, people that sit in their garden because one time me and my friends were out and we went down to the park and we were walking past one of the streets and this woman started shouting because apparently we were in her house and we were literally next to the park.*"

The participants in this focus group were asked to highlight the three top barriers and facilitators to their sport and physical activity levels.

Barriers:

- Safety
- People in the area
- Insufficient facilities and activities for their age group

Facilitators:

- Friends
- Access to transport

The participants in this group were unable to identify a third facilitator and were able to discuss the barriers in greater depth.

Year 8 "non-active" boys

Throughout the focus group discussion with the year 8 "non-active" male participants, they would often refer to negative influences on their participation in sport and physical activity in the local area and why their current engagement was not sufficient. For example, Kyle commented on the amount of time it would take him to travel to an outside open space he felt comfortable to play in. All the boys agreed that there could be more facilities, especially indoor facilities, in the area to increase their participation levels and for other people their age. They agreed that this would make exercising more accessible and increase their feeling of safety. On the topic of travel Kyle went on to argue: "*Most of the sport things are in Newcastle which is like 3 miles away… [and] there's not many football teams in the area that kids can play in, and pretty much nothing for cricket or basketball because they are less popular, it means there is none of that anywhere*". They felt that this lack of local choice discouraged people in the area from participating in sports outside of school and like the female participants, the male participants in this group also commented on the lack of organised sports available for their age group.

When discussing why their sport and physical activity levels were not meeting the current government recommended guidelines, participants referred to the lack of safety they felt in the area. Some of the participants explained that the area was dangerous, and so young people did not want to go outside by themselves. Specifically, Alex said, "*If you are in a group then it is fine, but like going by yourself is a no go until you are 18.*" Despite the boys' poor participation rates, they were all in agreement that if there was more choice of sporting activities available in safer and indoor environments, that they would like to be more involved in sport and physical activity.

In the final part of the focus group, the participants were asked to share their opinions on current influences on their participation. The first response to this question was bullying. It became clear that the participants in this group often felt like *outsiders* and sometimes were intimidated by their peers both inside and out of school which meant they would avoid certain outdoor spaces and physical activity, both inside and outside of school. As in the previous focus groups, they were asked to highlight the top three barriers and facilitators impacting their participation. Kyle began by feeding back:

> "*First is cost because I think people don't understand there's not many areas to do it and in those areas the prices are very high because there's not much anywhere else to go. Number 2 is availability which is below cost because you can't spend money on things that aren't there.*
> *There is nothing in the area apart from things that are very expensive. And last is safety because you wouldn't want to go to some of these places or even travel to some of these places specially if it's like daylight then it should be alright from like 8 o'clock to like 5 but outside of those times it is very dark usually people out on the streets are people you wouldn't really want to communicate with.*"

He also commented on the timings of after school sports clubs, arguing that they were not flexible.

To make the participants aware of how much physical activity they should be doing at school per day I explained that government recommendations state that they should engage with at least 30 minutes every day, to which Kyle responded that his teachers did not encourage people to achieve this. He suggested that there should be an increased amount of P.E lessons across the

week as people did not always choose to be active during their break times.

Year 9 "active" boys

In the final focus group with the year 9 "active" male participants it became clear that there were not as many influences on participation as there were in the focus groups with the other age groups. They were all able to refer to various forms of sport and physical activity they participate in on a weekly basis and were all in agreement that they have both the access and opportunity to meet the government recommended guidelines for their age group. They also believed that the area promotes sport and physical activity and there are enough facilities and activities. Like other participants in the focus groups, the boys in this group mentioned their concerns around safety when playing out at certain times of the day and in certain areas. They argued that they would not go to certain fields in the area on an evening and preferred to use these types of spaces during daylight. For example, when asked about the things that they regularly do in their free time, one of the boys shared that he often walks his dog, although his mum would sometimes worry that someone in the area might steal the dog from him. In terms of factors which encouraged them to participate in sport and physical activity, the participants all agreed that their friends motivated them to go outside and to engage with similar sporting activities to them.

In comparison to the other focus groups, the year 9 "active" boys shared the least amount of information regarding factors they believed were influences on their participation. From this it could be inferred that it this is something they have not had to previously consider. However, when asked directly about barriers to their participation, the boys were able to list multiple factors, some of which they spoke of as potential barriers for other people their age, who do not have the same level of access and opportunity as they do. For example, Jude spoke about the lack of transport some people may have access to, and the difficulty some young people may face getting to and from sporting commitments. He stated: "*Some young people's parents might work a lot and so they can't always get them to places*." This supports the narrative shared by other participants in the study, that there are not enough local facilities and access to some sports and physical activity for young people in the area and that participation, requires a certain level of transport. Jude also commented on the cost of sporting activities in the area and how there should be more free, organised sport for young people their age, as well as the price of certain equipment

like football boots, which can be expensive. This was a recurring theme throughout all the focus groups and therefore something for future consideration in sports policy development. Furthermore, two of the participants in this group commented on the lack of tennis courts in the area and the difficulty gaining access to sports which require specific equipment.

Interviews

Physical Education Staff Member

During the interview with the Physical Education Staff Member, it became clear that she negatively viewed the maintenance and up-keep of the local area and highlighted this as a detrimental factor on young people's physical activity engagement within local parks and communal spaces. She specifically emphasised the amount of litter and how this might prevent both young people and adults from wanting to visit these spaces. Jess also perceived the lack of safety as a factor affecting young people's participation in Wallsend, impacting girls especially. She suggested that many young people in the area felt it was unsafe to play outside and engage with certain spaces due to people, "*hanging about*".

However, many of the focus groups female participants were clearly wanting to participate in more sport than they currently were. For example, the girls attending after school clubs often talked about wanting to join a netball team outside of school but struggled to find a club near to where they all lived. Within this discussion, Jess also felt that for the families in Wallsend who did not enjoy financial stability, that this factor would discourage them from engaging with different types of sports and travelling to venues due to the cost incurred, thus negatively affecting participation levels. This barrier may have an increased impact on families with multiple young people who need to be at different sporting commitments at different time.

To understand the influence of the physical environment specifically, the PE Technician was asked to share whether she thought there was enough accessible and safe green space in the area, including fields, parks, and football pitches for young people to use:

> "*I think there is quite a lot of parks from what I can think of and there is a big field. They*

[the students] do seem to mention a lot of different parks so there must be quite a few but I'm not sure if there are football goals or whether it is just baby swings like they were mentioning."

Despite sharing some positive aspects of Wallsend and its environment, the final part of the interview focused on how Jess believed the area could be improved. She was specifically asked to share her opinions on how things could be done differently to allow more opportunity and easier access to a range of sports in the local area for all young people. She explained in the following statement:

"*I think the maintenance of parks maybe could be improved if they are not feeling safe, or maybe just some sort of security, I know that is money, but if they aren't feeling safe to go places… and a bit more promotion [in terms of the types of sports clubs available], but I think football wise there is a lot of opportunities. We have recently put some posters up in the changing rooms for boxing and stuff like that outside of school to try and promote those different sports.*"

As a way of further addressing these issues, she also went on to discuss the school's initiative to target students who do not participate in after school clubs. For example, she explained that the P.E department plan to carry out a dodgeball trip for those who participate less. It will be delivered in a non-competitive environment to boost the confidence of young people who often feel excluded from sport and physical activity.

Wallsend Innovation Officer

In the interview with Doreen, she spoke in-depth about young people's participation levels in sport and physical activity in Wallsend and was able to provide both positive and negative influences on their engagement. She began by describing some of the initiatives in place which aim to target young people who are currently spending too much time inactive. She talked specifically about a programme called "Power Through Sport", which gives young people the opportunity to take part in a wider variety of sports, aside from football, including skateboarding

and roller blade hockey. Doreen explained in further detail that the programme began around a year ago and is available to young people in the school holidays aged 8 and above. It takes place in one of the local parks in Wallsend so is accessible to families living nearby and a pizza van is also on-site to encourage more young people to attend. She also talked about other activities in the area such as cheerleading taster programmes and said that these sessions attract many young girls and allow for families to try different activities without committing to anything long term or paying membership fees. Doreen also explained that for young people identified from the sessions as particularly interested in cheerleading, but whose families could afford the membership fees, they offer some free places to allow them to join the cheerleading club and carry on participating longer term. She further explained the ethos of the programme:

> *"We are trying to have local people running the sports and clubs who then train people up so that it helps with the economy of the area…that is kind of the strategy that we are trying to get to for everybody that works across Wallsend to work together."*

Throughout the discussion with Doreen around the types of initiatives in the area which aim to increase sport and physical activity participation, she was able to refer to multiple schemes which have been introduced. For example, another activity which has been recently introduced to local people living in the area is, "Skinny Pigs". Doreen explained that Skinny Pigs is a Zumba programme run in local schools and community centres aiming to increase physical activity levels. The sessions are located in venues that people may already be familiar with and feel more confident and comfortable about attending with a more personal approach.

The final section of the interview focused on how Doreen thought the area could be improved to increase participation rates amongst young people. She was asked to provide detail on the current influences on young people's participation, covering the different facilitators and barriers they may be facing. She began by talking about the negative attitude many adults feel towards young people in the area, as they will often view any that play sport as engaging in anti-social behaviour. She believed there could be an increased sense of community to improve the relationship between older adults and young people living in Wallsend. She explained some of the reasons that young people gather in certain areas of Wallsend and how this might be viewed by adults:

"To feel safe, they will stay somewhere where it is light and it might be warm, it might be in a shopping centre…they want to feel like they are safe, so they are hanging about there and that is deemed by people in the area that they all just hang around getting free Wi-Fi."

Doreen also believed that there are some negative connotations amongst young people around the word "sport" and so it should be referred to as physical activity or exercise. She argued that many young people may interpret "sport" as too competitive and something they do not want to be involved in, whereas activities on offer to them could be promoted as something they can do for fun, enjoyment and to improve their physical and mental health. She also felt that one of the main barriers to young people's participation was financial cost, which she specifically highlighted as a problem for families with more than one child. Other barriers she listed included people's accessibility to transport and the concerns around safety when young people were outside of the home and school in Wallsend.

Football Coach

Throughout conversations with Paul, the factors affecting young people's participation in sport and physical activity were frequently highlighted. For example, he would often refer to the lack of communication, awareness and promotion of organised sporting activities outside of school and that many young people were unaware of what was on offer in their local area, particularly those living in the more deprived areas of Wallsend, who may need more support to structure their free time after school, on weekends and during the holidays. To understand the amount of sport and physical activity on offer to young people in Wallsend, Paul was asked to share his perception of other clubs and facilities in the area, aside from the Wallsend Boys Club, and if he thought there was enough opportunity for young people with different interests and abilities:

"No, I don't think there are [enough facilities]. I think Wallsend lacks young person friendly facilities. I mean we are quite lucky we are building a community hub which could be ready in about two or three weeks' time, to be able to offer and provide some sort of provision for young people, again going back to what I said earlier there are

sporadic pieces of work that goes on in Wallsend but nothing seems to be joined up. I think a natural place for people to hang around is the park and I know that in the past…anti-social behaviour was quite rife at the park so then there were targeted programmes that would take place on a Thursday, Friday and Saturday evening at where you would class as sort of antisocial behaviour hotspots where the police would be at but then there is not where to sign post the young

people to.”

Paul then went on to discuss the factors he perceived as influences on young people's participation in Wallsend; he was specifically asked to comment on both the barriers and facilitators. He began by arguing that cost, travel and a child's family background act as the biggest influencers on sport and physical activity engagement. For example, if there are multiple siblings within a family that this may impact how much sport each induvial child is able to do. This is because of the travel involved and the cost of equipment and membership fees. He also suggested that the reputation of a club may prevent some parents from sending their young people there and he explained this point in relation to the Wallsend Boys Club, arguing:

“*Wallsend Boys Club has quite a strong reputation across the country and across the world really so I think that might put people off, they might think it is an elitist club and you can only go there if you are good. That then leads to, does the family have the confidence to pick up the phone, drop and email or go on a Facebook page to send a message to say I have got a young daughter or a young son, how do we get involved?”*

As mentioned earlier in the interview, Paul again referred to the lack of promotion and advertisement aimed at young people in the local area informing them about whatwas on offer. He stressed the importance of using the most appropriate type of platforms and advertising strategies to reach and engage with the target audience. In addition, he was concerned about the viability and longevity of projects due to the lack of staff and funding available in the community to keep activities going and keep young people off the streets, and out of parks, engaging in antisocial behaviour:

“*Prevention and intervention is the way forward but that it is not always the case in terms*

of how the funding cycles work, sometimes things have to get really bad before anything is done about it."

To expand on the influences on young people's participation in sport and physical activity in Wallsend, some of the topics brought up in the focus groups were discussed. For example, Paul was asked to share his perception on the levels of safety in the area and how well he thought open green spaces were being maintained. He began by referring to a recent trip he had made to Belgium. He stated:

"What really stood out for me is on top of that experience is how clean Belgium is. Unbelievable in comparison to us. I don't know if it's a culture thing or a community pulling together to make sure it is the case. Absolutely stunning the streets were immaculate."

He also argued that through good maintenance of an area, there is better chance of "buy in" from more local people and an increase in their sense of community and an improved perception of their locality, as something to be proud of. Paul also believed that this has a knock-on effect - that if people in an area feel that there is more investment in their community by the council and other organisations then they will feel more pride, ownership, and sense of belonging in their surroundings and will take more care and time over their own gardens, local streets and areas.

He also touched on how well lit the area was and his perception of young people's level of safety in the following discussion:

"In general, I think the Wallsend streets are quite lit. Around the parks are quite lit. Double edge sword is that it attracts young people because it is light. Sometimes I think the local authority might just turn the lights off, so people don't hang around there. It could be a lot worse. A young person's safety is an interesting one...we have done a state of play report on where the club is at the moment about a year and a half ago and what came out of that is how we provide quite a safe space and a safe haven for young people for when they arrive, quite a nurturing environment so I mean that's great for us, great that's what people are saying but then if we asked them about outside of the club I'm not sure what they would say, where they go what they do outside of the

club."

Paul was then asked to explain how affordable the club was and to what extent he believed financial cost was an influence on people participations in the area. He began by discussing the price of submissions at the club:

"We were £30 per month last season and this season we are going to £33. It is the first time we have ever put them up in five years I think it is. It was a big decision to make, we didn't take it lightly. If you have a brother or a sister in the club, you then get your second child at half price and if you have financial difficulties, you can have a conversation with the club and your fees would be amended or appropriately lowered over a season."

Finally, Paul touched on the types of promotion they use at the club to increase participation levels of young people in the area and how they are ensuring that people in the community are aware of the different types of activities they provide. It was clear that the club was already very well known within the area of Wallsend, and in the North-east in general. However, staff members still go into schools to advertise the types of things that the club offers and how young people can get involved. He said that they offer breakfast, lunch and after school clubs for young people to try out the sessions, as well as funded programmes over the school holidays.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Experience of The Local Area

Throughout discussion with the participants in the study, a range of opinions and experiences were shared towards the local environment of Wallsend. One of the main themes to occur within the focus groups was the lack of safety felt by the young people. To begin, the "non-active" year 7 girls talked about their lack of interaction with the physical environment due to not feeling safe or comfortable when in certain outdoor spaces including local parks and streets. They were concerned about the type of people who may be there, which was a view also shared by their "active" year 7 female peers. They agreed, they do not feel safe in the area they live in and would sometimes avoid visiting their friends' houses, or staying outside after school, as they felt worried about the perceived threat from other people who live in Wallsend. This may highlight the amount of anti-social behaviour occurring in the community. Further, the students expressed that their parents were not happy for them to be outside in the area after a certain time of day or to be too far away from where they lived. The year 8 "non- active" boys also described the area to be quite anti-social at times, which would often stop them from playing out and interacting with green spaces, despite feeling that though they should be doing these activities. The group of participants to comment least on their experiences of feeling unsafe was the "active" year 9 boys. This may be because of their gender and age, as well as their confidence to use the outdoor spaces and perform sport and physical activity in Wallsend.

However, they also described the area to be quite "*dodgy*" in some parts. This point of view was reiterated by the Physical Education Staff Member, Jess, who shared that Wallsend sometimes has a poor and negative reputation. For example, people who live outside of the area may be unlikely to visit due to the types of stories and crimes they have heard about. She also highlighted that these connotations surrounding the Wallsend community are likely to impact young people's use of the outdoor area. Their perceived lack of security is a barrier to their engagement with the locality and consequently with sport and physical activity, on a more informal basis in their free time. To support this finding, the Wallsend Football Coach and the innovation officer commented on the "*pockets of deprivation*" in the area and the amount of anti-social behaviour which is reported. A similar point has previously been made by Bennet et al (2007) who found that low levels of neighbourhood safety are associated with lower levels of physical activity. Franzini et al

(2009) also found that the social environment of a place can impact people's participation in sport and physical activity more than the physical environment and safety has been a well-researched topic within this field of study. A study in 2000 by Morris also explored people's attitudes towards institutions and facilities in their local community. Specifically, the types of physical spaces including parks, leisure centres and clubs which are frequently used by young people. Within their findings, the importance of safety was highly valued among the young female participants. For example, one 13-year-old girl stated, "*I don't feel safe where I live*" (p.144). Another girl also described the area as "*trampy*". This previous research shows young people's concern over how safe an area is, as was also found in the present study. Furthermore, how safe people's outdoor green spaces are, is positively associated with a better quality of life (Tan et al., 2019). This was also found by Orstad et al (2020), who investigated the impact of local crimes and the benefits enjoyed by those living in areas of lower crime rates, particularly on their mental health as they were able to use outdoor spaces more freely. It may be inferred from the present study's findings, as well as previous literature, that there is a need for more consideration and emphasis around security and policing in Wallsend and how this affects young people's outdoor activity and perception of the place in which they live. There may also be a need for more well-lit streets and sufficient, affordable transport to encourage young people to use the different spaces in their area and interact with their peers outside of school.

Another element of the local area addressed by multiple participants, was the poor maintenance of the local area and how unclean it was. They referred to the amount of litter, in spaces such as fields and parks, as well as the substandard upkeep of equipment and how out of dated it was. For example, some of the year 7 "non-active" girls, who preferred more non-organised forms of physical activity, commented on the "*baby swings*" in their local park which they would like to see swings and equipment generally more appropriate for their age group. They said that they were unable to access much of the outdoor play equipment in their local area and therefore do not see any reason to interact with these spaces, negatively impacting their engagement with physical activity. Both female and male participants in the focus groups also agreed that there was too much litter and dog faeces in these areas which often discouraged them from being outside and participating in any form of physical activity in these areas. This finding also has the potential to reduce the sense of community in Wallsend and stop young people of different ages from mixing. The less time people spend outdoors, the less time they spend in shared communal spaces which

can lead to them becoming disengaged with physical activity and the local community generally, as opposed to more affluent and well-maintained areas where people feel more encouraged to participate in physical activity and are more likely to engage with their community and surroundings. To support this finding, research by Mears et al (2020) found that the lack of cleanliness in areas such as parks is related to higher rates of depression. Further research by Gidlow and Ellis (2011) also discovered that many of the participants in their study of deprived urban areas were unhappy with how outdated and unsuitable the facilities in their local area were, as found in the present study. Abbasi et al (2016) highlights, 'the most deprived areas still suffer from low quality and poorly maintained open spaces when compared to affluent areas' (p.194), which helps to understand why physical activity may be at a lower rate in Wallsend. Authors Thomas and Thompson (2004) argue that the less inviting an environment looks to young people, the less likely they are able to play with freedom. Therefore, when considering how to increase sport and physical activity in Wallsend, the maintenance and type of equipment accessible may need to be a higher priority and a greater sense of community may also need to be nurtured - the more people feel valued within their community the more likely they are to look after it e.g. by recruiting local litter picking volunteers. Moreover, future research could aim to understand more specifically the types of equipment that young people would like in their area to increase their presence and levels of activity.

Another finding, highlighted in the data in relation to the local environment, was the young people's feeling that there was a lack of options and accessibility around sport and physical activity. This point was made by the male and female non-active participants in the study. They commented on the lack of variation of sport and physical activity available and opportunity to get involved in their community. They did not feel as though their interested interests were being catered for. Thus, it may be inferred that there could be a wider range of activities made accessible to young people in the area, aside from football, ensuring there are different options available for different people's interests. There needs to be an increased sense of inclusion and consideration for young people who do not just want to play football. For example, many of the "non-active" focus group participants who were not brought up in typically sport-based families may prefer a more informal approach to sport and physical activity. This may involve delivery where they can engage with a range of multi-sports and activities which are centred around fun and enjoyment rather than competition. This finding will be discussed further in the later sections

of the discussion. In support of this observation shared by the young people, the Wallsend Innovation Officer also argued that there could be an increased, and well promoted efforts, to engage with secondary school pupils in the area, to bring them together and increase their physical activity levels. This would also promote a wider sense of community which may help to tackle other issues which have been discussed within the study. Doreen specifically stated that activities must be appropriate and appeal to all sporting abilities and different age groups, to retain young people's participation.

Furthermore, the "non-active" year 7 female participants agreed that there could be more outdoor facilities and initiatives for people their age which allowed them to participate in sport and physical activity in a non-organised environment. This opinion highlights the lack of voice that young people currently have in Wallsend and the need to implement strategy which listens to their opinions and requirements, entertaining and effectively engaging with them to reduce sedentary behaviour. Moreover, this effective use of outdoor space may also help to reduce the presence of gangs and anti- social behaviour making outdoor spaces a safer environment for young people . Like their female peers, the year 8 "non-active" boys commented on the lack of indoor facilities and sports centres near to where they lived which meant they would have to travel outside of the local area to participate in organised sport. However, in the interviews with the Wallsend Football Coach and the Innovation Officer they argued that these types of facilities were sufficient within the area. This highlights the possible lack of communication, awareness and advertisement of sport and the facilities in which activities are being held by the adult organisers in the community, as well as alignment between those who are organising and delivering sport and physical activity and the audience they are targeting. Similar findings were also discovered by Morrow (2000) which highlighted the lack of facilities available to young people in their area, with many of the participants feeling that there was not enough for them to do. It may be inferred therefore, that more attention is needed in the promotion of such facilities and their offerings to young people. This may involve staff members of community and leisure centres visiting schools, leafleting the local areas and making more parents, carers and adults generally aware of the activities they provide for young people.

However, it was also clear that the young people in the focus groups did value the green space in Wallsend. In the main, they talked positively of parks, fields, their gardens and the outdoor space

they would use when outside. For example, the year 8 "non-active" boys were especially passionate about the importance of being outside, ensuring they get enough fresh air and the positive impact this has on their physical and mental health. It may be inferred that these participants preferred lower intensity forms of exercise which involved being outside and enjoying the benefits of the natural environment. It was clear that being outside was important to the "non-active" male participants in the study, which also may be because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the amount of time young people spent indoors.

As current literature highlights, there are many benefits for young people who engage with their local environment on a regular basis. For example, Natural England (2009), stated that people's neighbourhoods are directly linked to physical activity participation and obesity levels in young people. The greater access people have to green space, the more likely they are to perform physical activity (Cohen et al., 2007). Gidlow and Ellis' (2011) study also showed that young people aged 12 to 15, highly value green space and their interaction with the natural environment. Without this they do not have as much opportunity to exercise or play with others of a similar age.

The final theme in relation to the local area was the participants' perceived sense of community spirit within Wallsend. There were varying responses to this topic within the data of this study which may highlight the differing opinions of the different age groups within the community. . The young people in the focus groups commented on the lack of acceptance they often felt from older people living nearby. For example, many said that they often felt mistrusted, as though they themselves were considered a problem within the community. Some participants explained that adults would discourage them from engaging with sport and physical activity near their houses. This finding was also highlighted in the 2007 report by the Children's Society which showed that 43% of adults stated that children under the age of 14 should not be allowed outside of their home to play with friends, without adult supervision. The Wallsend Innovation Officer argued that there is a strong sense of community within the area. She related this to the fact that many people spend much of their life living in Wallsend and do not move elsewhere. She stated that everything people needed was likely to be on their doorstep in Wallsend and so people did not feel the need to relocate. However, a different opinion was shared by the Football Coach who argued that Wallsend is a "*transient community*" because of the quality-of-life people experience there and the opportunities currently available to people. Thus, there may be a difficulty in

Wallsend to build momentum around the sense of community and create an environment where people want to improve the area. This may help to explain the lack of maintenance and lack of safety in certain spaces

Sport and Physical Activity in the Local Area

To explore the impact of Wallsend as a place and the influence it is having on young people's sport and physical activity participation, it was important to gather an in-depth understanding of the types of activities they were currently engaging in and how often they were doing them. Throughout the focus groups with the students, their opinions and experiences of sport and physical activity were spoken about, both inside and outside of school. How they felt that Wallsend played a role in this was also considered. However, discussion with participants often shifted away from the second research aim regarding the different types of sport and physical activity they participate in, as they mainly focused on how they felt about sport and how it could be improved in the area.

Throughout discussion with the year 7 "active" girls, it became clear that they all engaged in a good amount of sport and physical activity but were keen to participate in more and in a wider range of activities, not just football. For example, they argued that they would be willing to travel if needed and participate in sport with male peers, if this meant that they could increase their activity and skill levels. This finding highlights the interest in sport among these young people, as well as the lack of variety of activities on offer to them or which they are currently aware of. However, this view was contradicted by comments from Doreen in one of the interviews carried out. For instance, she talked about secondary school aged girls being reluctant to participate in exercise and wanting to just "*watch on*" when the boys were playing. Doreen made this point in the context of activity in school, especially at break time. This is a key finding, as it highlights the different behaviours amongst young male and female students across different schools in Wallsend at different times and in a range of spaces. Other research has also found that many girls find their school uniform is a barrier to physical activity during break time at school, whereas boys are dressed a lot more practically to engage with sport (Watson et al., 2015). Many of the female participants in this study spoke positively about sport both inside and outside

of school. For example, one of the girls travels outside of Wallsend to play for a mixed gendered football team. This finding contradicts previous literature which often highlights girls' lack of enthusiasm for sport, especially when having to participate with their male peers (Watson et al., 2015). The participants in the year 7 "active" girls focus group were very enthusiastic about the sport they participated in at school during break time, in P.E and at after school clubs. The girls also engaged enthusiastically in conversations around an upcoming school football trip to Barcelona. This type of extra-curricular offering at their school appears a good way to engage more young people in sport and physical activity, as well as developing students' cultural awareness and improving their relationship with physical education and health related behaviours outside of school (Bailey, 2005).

It also became apparent that the girls' families were one of the main supporting factors in their sporting involvement. The participants spoke of their family's encouragement and that they helped to build their confidence in sport, that their parents facilitated them being able to play for a local football team outside of school, playing outside with their friends and attending different types of activity in the local area, such as the gym and swimming pools, all of which they enjoyed. It can be inferred therefore that young people's families play an important role in the enjoyment and frequency of their participation and their ability to try and pursue different sports. Such findings are supported by the research conducted by Budd et al (2018) which found that when adolescent girls enjoy participating in physical activity, they are more likely to engage with the social and physical environment. Budd et al (2018) suggested that further research may consider the types of sport and physical activity young people participate in inside of school, to help inform the types of opportunities which could be built into the local environment. In all the focus groups in the present study, participants were asked to share their opinions on this topic and explain the activities they enjoyed and fully engaged with during school sport activity, whether at lunch time, during P.E lessons or at after school clubs. When discussing place in more detail, participants were able to offer their opinions on the impact of the physical environment. For example, many of the female students spoke about the accessibility to green space in Wallsend and how this was a motivating factor in terms of their sport and physical activity participation. Across all the focus groups, participants talked about their use of the different field and parks in the area and how these were generally good places for people their age. It may be inferred from the data that many of the young people's participation in non-organised sport, especially football,

was due to the ease of access to open fields located near to where they lived. This may also have had an influence on some of the girls' interest in watching football and which further inspired their interest in sport. As well as the natural environment, the participants also talked about some of the local facilities in Wallsend which enabled them to participate in sport and physical activity. They were able to name some, including the swimming pool and nearby leisure centres, that they would sometimes visit to go to for a swim or for a workout at the gym. They said however that they would be less likely to visit these facilities if they were not going with their friends, which highlights the importance of peers in these kind of local sporting environments. This finding was also found in Brockman's (2011) research which emphasised the importance of young people's friendships especially when playing sport. Brockman (2011) argued, it is one of the main motivators for young people in their sport and physical activity participation, as it gives them chance to socialise and interact with people their own age. It also provides them with a feeling of safety and increases the likelihood of enjoying the activity more which was mentioned by many of the participants in this study. For example, this theme was particularly relevant amongst the female participants, as they said that they were more likely to engage with activities that their peers were doing, rather than doing them on their own. It can be concluded that the year 7 "active" female participants, participate in a sufficient amount of sport and are physical activity both in and outside of school. They also participate in more than one sport but would like the opportunity to try new activities in the future. The outdoor spaces in the area enable the girls to meet up and play outside of school enabling them to keep active and benefiting them both physically and mentally.

However, some of the themes discussed amongst the "active" year 7 girls were not aligned in the focus group of the "non-active" year 7 girls. For example, in the early conversations around their current sport and physical activity levels, it became clear that they were not as enthusiastic as their "active" peers. Most of the girls did not regularly participate in sport outside of school and did not use the outdoor space in Wallsend for physical activity purposes and so were more reliant on P.E lessons and after school clubs. This finding highlights the importance and need for a good delivery of school sport which enables young people to participate in sufficient levels of exercise at a moderate to vigorous intensity, as stressed in the government guidelines (Department of Health, 2011). Nevertheless, some of the girls commented that they were more likely to engage with activities if their friends were, an opinion shared by the "active" year 7 girls. This view is

supported by the findings of Brockman (2011). From this, it may be suggested that young females are encouraged by their peers and would benefit from more organised activities for their specific age range and gender to increase attendance, enjoyment and participation. Despite being unable to name many sports they participate in out of school, many of the "inactive" girls were still able to name various sports and activities they enjoyed, including, dodgeball, basketball, gymnastics and bike riding. It may be suggested that these types of sports, should be advertised more effectively or made available on a more informal or "social basis" for young females outside of school.

This discussion around more informal organised activity was also brought up in the interview with Doreen. She commented on the current initiatives in place which are trying to bring young people together in Wallsend, offering a range of alternative sports as a way of engaging young people and ensuring that there is something on offer for everyone. It was stated by one of the girls in the "active" year 7 focus group that she had left her local football team as she stopped enjoying playing. From this, it is important that local initiatives are centred around young people and their preferences, especially those who need more support to achieve the recommended physical activity guidelines. A way of doing this may be to encourage anonymous surveys and questionnaires in school to inform local sport policy. Another finding highlighted by both Doreen and the year 7 girls, was the lack of engagement among females whilst in and around local outdoor spaces such as parks and fields nearby to where they live. For example, as mentioned by one of the year 7 "in-active" girls, "*we don't really do sports when we go to the park we just hang out*." This point was also reiterated by Doreen when she spoke about the different behaviour of boys and girls during break time at school and outside of school in the local area. She argued that whilst the boys ran around, usually kicking a ball, many of the girls will be sat on the grass watching or standing around in a group observing what the boys are doing. This highlights the different cultures and restrictions on groups of young males and females and the impact this can have on their sport and physical activity levels.

Many of the female focus group participants agreed that there were not enough pieces of well-maintained equipment for people their age to use. When visiting spaces like fields and parks, the girls were therefore less likely to participate in any form of exercise and so they were more likely to just hang around and watch the boys play football. From this, it could be suggested that there is

a need for more up to date equipment and facilities in the physical environment in Wallsend, to give girls the opportunity to participate in exercise and be in spaces where they feel encouraged to do so.

Like the year 7 "non active" girls, the year 8 "non-active" boys also struggled to share examples of any sport or physical activity they were currently participating in outside of school. Most of their time spent engaging with exercise was done during the school day, mainly in P.E lessons. This highlights the need for more engaging forms of physical activity in the local area to encourage and ensure that young people who do not normally enjoy sport as much, are still keeping active. However, one of the "non- active" Y8 boys commented on his enthusiasm for weightlifting which he does on a regular basis in his bedroom. He argued that this form of exercise is sufficient and enjoyable enough and so he does not feel as though he needs to engage in any other activity. This type of activity does not require any interaction with the local environment, which may suggest there is less desire from some young people to use outdoor spaces. This may be because of the Covid-19 pandemic and having to find different ways to be active. This may also indicate that it may not always be the lack of access or maintenance of the physical environment which discourages some young people from participating in sport in these areas, but that there are other types of exercise they may enjoy which can be done inside of the home, which also saves them money and time spent travelling. The Wallsend Football Coach also felt that there was insufficient promotion, alignment and cohesion in the delivery of sport and physical activity for young people in the area. This may explain the lack of regular participation amongst some secondary pupils, especially those who are from families where sport does not play a significant role in their lives. Future improvements could therefore be centered around targeting specific groups in the community who are not currently achieving the government's recommended guidelines. Future policy could be implemented to ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for groups with lower activity rates, and to also make them fully aware of what is available to them through targeted advertising. To expand on this point, a similar narrative was also expressed by Doreen. She raised the point that young people who are less known for being involved in sport are often marginalised and "*kept out of the loop*" in terms of what may be on offer to them. This may also be an issue within the school environment, where those who are not considered as good at sport are often made to feel, left out, isolated and less comfortable when participating. Similar opinions were reiterated by the Physical Education Staff Member who

shared that some female students were struggling to find sports clubs they would like to take part in. Like the Wallsend Football Coach, she also agreed that a lot of young people will just "*go to school and go home again*" and that they are also potentially unaware of the activities they can participate in.

In contrast, when talking to the "active" year 9 male participants they did not struggle to talk about the different types of sport and physical activity they participate in on a regular basis. They were able to name a range of activities such as boxing, the gym and football. Compared to the other focus groups in the study, it was apparent that the year 9 boys experienced the least number of barriers in relation to their participation.

Influences on Young People's Sport and Physical Activity Participation

To understand the impact of Wallsend as a place and the influence it is currently having on young people's participation in sport and physical activity, all of the participants were asked to evaluate and explain what they thought were facilitators and barriers to the different forms of activity and how regular they engage with it.

One of the main findings from the focus groups, especially from the female participants, was the lack of cost-effective activities and facilities available to them. It became clear that there is enough space and facilities to cater for football, however those who do not play this particular sport, have less options and opportunity to be involved in different activities which they may prefer. A study by Eime et al (2015) found that less affluent areas often have less access to a range of facilities. This can create disparity between communities of different socio-economic status, which may also affect the range and quality of sport and physical activity young people are involved in. For example, previous research has found that those from wealthier backgrounds who have attended fee-paying schools are more likely to succeed within sports such as rowing and hockey. As the Sutton Trust has found, Team GB's top Olympians are four times as likely to have been to private schools than the population as a whole, statistics showing that 32% of Britain's 130 medal winners at the 2016 Olympic games attended fee- paying schools. This topic was also spoken about by the Wallsend Football Coach who discussed the lack of funding for

sport in the area, a barrier to participation for young people growing up in the community. In support of this, when the female participants discussed barriers to participation in sport and physical activity, it was agreed by many that financial cost would often deter them from being involved. They also commented on the different types of equipment needed to participate in sport, such as football boots which they highlighted as something their parents often complained about having to buy. To reiterate this point, when asked to list the top three barriers preventing their participation, all of the students in the male focus groups agreed that the cost of sport and physical activity was one of them and it was listed as the main barrier to participation for the "non-active" year 8 boys. This finding helps to explain some of the participants' lack of physical activity in areas outside of Wallsend, which may be more expensive to get to and be involved in on a regular basis.

However, to tackle this issue within the community the Wallsend Innovation Officer spoke on the types of action and initiatives which have been put into place. For example, she explained that specific activities have been organised at zero cost to increase the physical activity participation of target groups within the area. Although, cost may be required to achieve long-term participation. Thus, there is still work to be done to ensure that sport and physical activity is made more accessible and feasible for all young people, especially in more deprived places and areas of poverty like Wallsend. Any added expense to participate in activities may discourage some parents and families from involving their young people, especially those with multiple young people who may need to be at different places at different times. Also, parents who need to work multiple jobs may be unable to get their young people to after school activities on time, which might have a negative impact on the amount of exercise that young people growing up in lower socio-economic families, are participating in. Key insights investigated by Sport England (2023) support this finding - around two thirds of adults and parents/carers have made changes to their young people's's participation in sport and physical activity due to cost of living increases. Their research has also shown that higher inflation rates and utility costs are impacting sport sector organisations. For example, clubs are reducing their number of sessions, moving venues and increasing their cost of membership fees (Sport England, 2023), all of which is impacting on young people's ability to achieve the government recommended guidelines for activity levels. Another theme discussed throughout many of the focus groups and interviews, was the lack of advertisement and awareness of sport and physical activity in Wallsend. As argued by the

Physical Education Staff Member, many of the school's female students were unaware of the sport-based activities in the area which may be already available to them. In particular, many of the year 7 female pupils were not able to find anywhere to join a netball team and so were not happy with the number of activities available and were often unaware of where to go to get more involved in sport for their age group. This view was also held by the Wallsend Football Coach who believed that there was a lack of connection and relationship between the different sporting organisations and clubs in the community. He argued, more could be done to signpost young people in the direction of sport and physical activity, claiming that "*one-off*" initiatives are not the answer to a long-term decline in young people's health related behaviours in Wallsend. From this, it may also be inferred that there is a lack of effective communication with secondary school young people about where they can go on a regular basis to participate in activities, exercise and sport and it seems there is a need for better promotion of such activities in a way that appeals to young people and encourages them to take part. A similar finding was also highlighted by James et al (2018) which discovered that many young people feel disconnected to sport policy in their local areas and would like to be more involved in the decision- making process and implementation of activities for themselves and others their age. It may be argued that young people living in the Wallsend community deserve more of a voice and say in how policy is decided and the types of sport and physical activity which are delivered. To increase the amount of exercise amongst many "non-active" young people, sport may need to be organised and advertised in a more informal way which prioritises fun and gives young people more chance to socialise with people their own age. Sport policy might also aim to target families, providing them with activities which they can all take part. Sessions should be organised and advertised locally and, on a day, or time which suits working parents, to eliminate potential barriers to participation.

Furthermore, the number of sporting role models and exposure to professional sport which young people in Wallsend are experiencing, may also be affecting their knowledge, awareness and consequent participation. For example, young people living in areas of higher deprivation are less likely to be able to afford to attend sporting events or watch as much sport as their counterparts in more affluent areas. This may also help to explain the lower rates of participation amongst lower socio-economic groups in specific areas of Wallsend. A similar point has also been found by Love et al (2019) who discovered there are clear disparities in the amount of intense physical

activity a child does depending on their socio-economic and ethnic background.

Another influence on many of the young people's participation in sport and physical activity in the focus groups, was the lack of maintenance and replacement of play equipment in Wallsend. For example, many of the young people commented that outdoor spaces such as parks and fields were often covered in litter and have "*run-down*" facilities which were outdated for young people their age and younger to use. In particular, the "non-active" year 8 boys would like to see new indoor facilities built near to where they live and argued that this would also help to tackle barriers around safety and therefore increase the likelihood of participating in sport and physical activity after school, as well as during times of the year when the weather was not as good. This view was supported by the Physical Education Staff Member and the Football Coach who agreed with the students in the focus groups. They argued that Wallsend has a negative reputation for being untidy and not somewhere that people living outside of the area would potentially like to visit, resulting in less people wanting to go outside and in spaces where exercise might take place. Parents may also be less inclined to encourage their young people to play outside after school and allow their young people to meet up with their friends on a weekend if outdoor spaces are not looked after properly. As a result of these factors, many of the participants talked about how they would have to travel to get to acceptable and sufficient spaces and areas which allowed them to perform sport and physical activity enjoyably and safely. This was particularly prevalent among the non-active participants in the focus groups. They spoke of the lack of organised sport available to them and how they would have to go to Newcastle to find activities to participate in.

Moreover, one of the active female participants spoke about how she was still willing to travel to an area she used to live in to play for her football team. These findings highlight that when young people have an interest and passion for sport, they can be more willing to travel a distance to participate if they have the ability to do so which may not always be an option for families living in Wallsend. Whereas more casual forms of activity amongst those who are classed as less "sporty" may be negatively impacted if they have to travel.

Confidence and self-esteem were a topic discussed predominately by the year 7 female participants within the focus groups in relation to the influences on their sport and physical activity participation. They began by referring to the impact of the success of the England women's national football team and their victory at the Euros in 2022. They shared that this made

them feel excited by sport and inspired them to participate more. This demonstrates the positive impact of increased awareness of women's sport and the power of positive female role models. It is important that young people from lower- socio-economic backgrounds are made aware of and are given the chance to watch and visit professional sporting events. This could be something implemented by schools in Wallsend to make sport more accessible and inspire their students. Another factor spoken about by the focus group students which affected their confidence in sport, was the involvement and encouragement of their peers. Many of the female participants commented on feeling much more comfortable in physical activity settings if others their age were also participating. However, some of the female participants often felt discouraged by their male peers who sometimes bullied, humiliated and intimidated them when participating in sport. Furthermore, the non-active participants specifically, both male and female, also argued that they did not want to be involved with sport and physical activity when with people who were of a higher sporting ability than them as it made them feel less confident and less likely to participate. Such findings highlight the impact of young people's peers on their engagement and enjoyment of sport and the positive and/or negative influence they can have during their high school years. In relation to self-esteem and confidence in sport, the Wallsend Community Officer, also spoke about the impact of using the term "*sport*" amongst less active young people. She argued that referring to sport differently and phrasing it as "*physical activity*" or "*exercise*" could have a positive influence on young people's perception of sport and increase their engagement. It may also be useful to advertise sport as something to do for fun and as way of improving mental and physical health, rather than prioritising competition and performance.

With regards the young people's confidence in sport during the school day, some of them argued that there was not enough encouragement during break times at school by teachers to be active. The year 7 "non-active" boys also commented on not wanting to attend after school clubs which may also highlight the lack of inclusivity and targeting of those who are not typically "*sporty*" people. However, the Physical Education Staff Member did explain the P.E departments attempt to engage with more young people in the future who are currently inactive outside of school. She referred to an upcoming dodgeball trip which will be made available to those who are not usually involved in sport on a regular basis. The trip will aim to be delivered in a fun, non-competitive way to boost confidence and encourage young people to play and adopt a more positive attitude towards sport.

Finally, the main factor influencing all the young people's participation in sport and physical activity was their perception of safety in Wallsend. This topic was discussed by all the participants in each of the focus groups and they agreed that they often feel unsafe when using outdoor spaces in the community. In particular, the female participants commented on how they are often discouraged from meeting up with their friends to play sport due to concerns about anti-social behaviour and who may be "*hanging about*". This finding shows the need for increased attention in Wallsend to make young people feel safer in the area they live. Regarding sport and physical activity, the data also highlights the need to for more organised sport and targeted initiatives to be put into place where young people can participate in a safe and supervised environment. There could also be an increased number of family-oriented activities in the community as a way of bringing people together and creating an environment where young people feel like they can engage with exercise safely.

The data collected in the present study aligns with the approach taken by Sport England (SE) in their 12 local delivery pilots. For example, Sport England prioritised the importance of recognising the needs of local people and each individual community. They began by identifying each of the community's structure, relationship and geography. Their aim was to find specific gaps and areas for improvement in the different places, so that appropriate sport and physical activity intervention could be implemented to develop the area and increase participation levels. This way, the people are at the centre of the approach and feel as though they are being listened to. Similarly, in relation to the present study, it was important to understand Wallsend as a place by considering its surroundings and the people who live there. This 'bottom-up' approach allowed for in-depth findings into local people's perception of the area, as well as how much sport and physical activity they participated in and how they felt that the characteristics of the community impacted this. In summary, it is clear that young people do not always feel they are safe or have a sense of belonging in their local area of Wallsend. This is often due to negative attitudes held by older adults, who are often discouraging of sport being played in shared outdoor spaces. The maintenance and cleanliness of certain spaces could also be improved, as this is currently making young people not want to be outside and engage with their local facilities. However, the young people in the study made it clear that their relationships with their friends and the support of their family has a positive impact on the amount of sport and physical activity

they engage with. For example, if participating in sport with people they are comfortable with, they are more likely to travel and enjoy the activities. Nevertheless, further efforts could be made to improve the physical and social environment to encourage young people to utilise safe outdoor spaces and make sport and physical activity more accessible in terms of travel and cost.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The findings of this study have built on previous research and aim to raise awareness in the Wallsend community for future policy implementation. Data collected has answered the three research aims set out in the introduction of the thesis, which will now be evaluated in the below conclusions.

Prior to conducting any research, it was clear from previous studies that there has been a lack of attention and involvement of young people within the literature with regards to their engagement with place and the impact it may have on their sport and physical activity participation (Morrow, 2000). There has also been very little research into young people's attachment to a place and how their sense of place develops (Grimshaw and Mates, 2022). However, it is understood, to analyse young people's's health related behaviours affecting their physical and mental health, the place in which they live must be taken into consideration (Kelso, 2021). Therefore, by involving young people the study has provided a up-to-date insight into how Wallsend as a place impacts their engagement with sport and physical activity. This research study has addressed these areas, by directly engaging with young people and staff working in different roles in Wallsend. The data produced was interpreted through three different themes which aimed to address the research aims of the study. These included: (i) Experience of The Local Area (ii) Sport and Physical Activity in The Local Area and (iii) The Influences on Young Peoples Sport and Physical Activity in The Local Area. Across the themes the impact of place and how it affects young people's lives and sport and physical activity participation was explored with focus on the physical environment and the influence of gender.

To begin, when analysing the data surrounding their experience of the local area, the young people's perception of place and opinions of where they live became clear within the initial stages of the focus groups. The young people in this study were very open about their experiences and attitudes towards the area of Wallsend providing detailed responses to the questions asked in the focus groups. This helped to interpret why some of the participants' current activity levels may not be reaching the governments recommended guidelines and why they may be discouraged to participate in sport and physical activity in their local area. Many of the young people referred to their lack of safety when using outdoor spaces in Wallsend and how this can lead to more time spent indoors, increasing their sedentary behaviour. Another factor regularly discussed was the

lack of maintenance and cleanliness of the area which also discourages them and their peers from wanting to be outside and engage with communal spaces. Some participants argued, there could be increased access to green space and targeted initiatives put into place. The male and female participants discussed many of the same topics in relation to place and their opinions on the social and physical environment. To improve young people's perception of their local area, further efforts could be made to improve young people's sense of belonging and to make them feel more included and catered for. Throughout data collection, they often felt as though barriers such as cost, and travel would hinder their ability to participate and feel like the area does not put enough into place to counteract these barriers. As highlighted by the Football coach, an increased amount of communication and signposting is needed to increase young people's engagement in the community. There could be a more joint up approach between local stakeholders to ensure everyone is working together to achieve the same goal to improve young people's lives living in Wallsend. It was also highlighted by participants that there is not enough advertisement of sport and physical activity. Increased efforts could be made to communicate directly with young people which may involve sporting organisations going into schools and promoting their activities. In summary, it is clear that the social and physical environment of a place, like Wallsend, can have great impact on young people's enthusiasm and enjoyment of sport and physical activity also having influence on their level of participation.

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n relation to the types of sport and physical activity trends occurring in Wallsend, the second theme to emerge in the study, the participants responses differed. It became clear within the data that some of the young people enjoy participating in sport and physical activity and some do not. In relation to place, it also became apparent that Wallsend has both negative and positive impacts on the young people's engagement with sport. Some participants are satisfied with the outdoor space near to where they live and the access this gives them to sport, whereas other participants felt as though certain green spaces could be maintained better and made more accessible and often do not need the physical environment to achieve their physical activity goals. Further, the findings show that participants' both male and female participants were able to talk in-depth about their current engagement with sport and physical activity in the area. Findings showed that the majority of the focus group participants want to engage with more sport and physical activity and were able to discuss how they believe the area could be improved to allow for this. In summary, policy should adopt particular focus on young people who are not typically sporty and who do not currently meet the government's recommended guidelines. For example, many of the "non-active" participants made it clear that there is not enough variation of sport and physical

activity and would like more opportunity to participate in a wider range of sport in Wallsend, not just football. Thus, future policy implementation of sport and physical activity could also understand better and cater for an increased amount of young people's interests, this may differ from how sport has been delivered previously. For instance, there could be more organised sport for young people and appropriate equipment in outdoor spaces to allow them to engage with physical activity in a more informal way with their friends. Alternative sports such as roller blading and skateboarding could also become more accessible and organised to provide options for young people who are not as interested in the traditional forms of sport and physical activity. Therefore, it is important that young people continued to be listened to in this field of research.

The final theme to emerge from the data set was the types of influences on young people's sport and physical activity participation. These findings detailed all of the participants' views on how young people's engagement with sport and physical activity are being affected in Wallsend. Several themes were explored including cost, travel, the promotion of sport and physical activity, the maintenance of the local area, confidence and self-esteem and safety. The male and female participants discussed a lot of similar opinions within these topics and so in relation to place gender did not play a significant role in this study. However, with regards gender, it may be argued that the female participants in the study were affected more by their feeling that the area was unsafe. This was present across both focus groups with the "active" and "non-active" girls. Whereas, in discussion with the male participants, they presented more confidence when speaking about being outside and engaging with the physical environment, in particular the year 9 "active" boys. For example, the young male participants referred to less crime related incidents compared to their female counterparts. Future policy implementation could focus on ensuring that there are safe spaces for young people to participate in sport and physical activity, with particular emphasis on female engagement. This may include girl-only sessions designed and delivered around their specific interests. However, findings also highlight that increased efforts could be made to build equipment suitable for young people to use in areas such as parks, ensuring both adolescent boys and girls are catered for. As highlighted by several participants, girls are more likely to be sedentary than their male peers if there is not sufficient equipment available; boys will often play football whereas girls will sit on and watch. Participants often commented on the cost of sport and physical activity and the detrimental effects it can have on their engagement, especially families with multiple young people. However, the topic analysed most by the participants was their lack of safety in the area and the impact of anti-social behaviour. This was discussed by both male and female participants, although it can be concluded that the boys were

more confident being outside in local public spaces than their female counterparts. Thus, future policy implementation should look to create safer outdoor spaces for young people and more organised sport in supervised environments. Further research could also explore this issue in more detail; how young people feel unsafe and what could be done to reduce this.

Amongst the adult participants in the study, it can be inferred that there is need for a more joined up approach across Wallsend to direct and make young people more aware of where to play sport and to retain participation levels across secondary school. Young people However, with regards to the positive influences on young people's participation in Wallsend, participants often referred to their friends and family who will encourage, and make sport, more accessible for them. It was clear in the findings of the study that young people's young people are more likely to participate in sport and physical activity in familiar surroundings with people they feel comfortable with. Future research could include a larger sample size to gather a wider representation of young people in the area and to understand place on a larger scale. However, both male and female participants were involved, as well as young people of varying levels of current moderate to vigorous physical activity participation. This allowed for a range of experiences and perceptions of sport and physical activity to emerge which also highlights the different influences of Wallsend and other affecting factors. This research study adds valuable findings to current gaps in the literature in relation to future policy implementation which aims to increase young people's sport and physical activity levels. Findings highlight the types of facilitators and barriers experienced by young people and their families in the local area of Wallsend. From this, it is clear that place can have a significant impact on young people's interaction with outdoor physical spaces and sport and physical activity participation as a result. It is important that local areas and communities take the young people's experiences into consideration and work to reduce the negative influencers on their participation.

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Appendix 1: Focus group presentation slides

How do you feel about the area you live in?

What type of facilities and places are here: shops, cinema, sports centres etc. ?

Wallsend

Where do you spend a lot of your free time outside of school and home?

How could the area be improved?
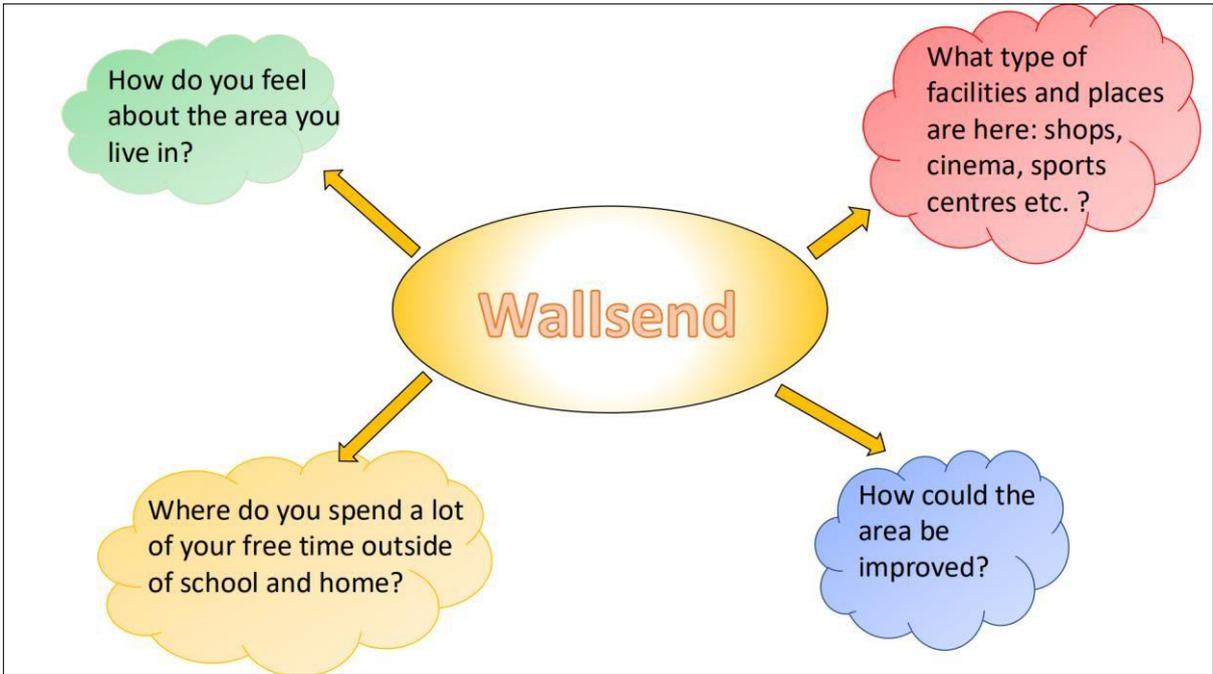
Barriers and facilitators

- Transport
- Cost
- Other hobbies (TV, phone ect)
- Green space
- Safety
- Parents/ carers
- Facilities
- Time

Questions to think about...

Do you feel safe playing out in your area?

What are the biggest barriers to you?

What is **NOT** a problem for you?

Could there be more parks and fields etc?

Task:

Rank the listed barriers and facilitators from 1 to 10

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

THE AREA: WALLSEND

- How would you describe Wallsend?
- How do you think the children would describe Wallsend?
- To what extent do you think there is a sense of community spirit in Wallsend?

YOUNG PEOPLES PARTICIPATION IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN THE LOCAL AREA

- Where do young people participate in sport and PA in the local area?
- What do you think of the provision of facilities for them to participate in (indoor and outdoor) in Wallsend?
- What do you think of the provision of green space in the area, like fields, parks and football pitches?
- Do you get the impression a lot of young people participate in out of school sports clubs?
- What do you think of the clubs in the area, what sports are on offer to young people?
- Where do you think a lot of young people spend their free time, hanging around on corners, playing out in their street / outdoor spaces, indoors?
- Do you think there are enough young people participating in sport and PA, are levels low/ high – do you have any statistics or research on this? Do you think children are getting 30 active minutes of PA in school per day – meeting guidelines?
- Is here a range of sports on offer? Could there be more in the area to promote sport and PA?
- Travel outside of the area to play?

SCHOOL SPORT AND PE

- To what extent do you think young people enjoy PE
- Do a lot of students engage with sport and physical activity at break time?
- Does the school offer enough extracurricular activities for students of all ages and abilities?

BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS

- What are key influences on young people's participation
- In the local area, what do you think stops young people from participating in sport and PA?

- Are there similar or different issues affecting participation of young people in Wallsend to other places?
- Does the area offer grassroots / beginners activities? Are some groups excluded?
- How do you think older people/ parents feel about sport and PA?
- How do you think the area could be improved to increase participation rates in children?
- How do you think safety in Wallsend may affect young people's engagement in sport and physical activity?
- I want to ask you specifically about some of the issues raised in my focus groups with children:
- To what extent do you think youth anti-social behaviour/ crime in the area affects children's participation in sport and physical activity?
- Are sports clubs / facilities expensive to use?
- Are there good facilities/ indoor and outdoor? Are the safe to use? Are they clean? Is there enough street lighting?
- Are there enough sports club/ after school clubs for young people to engage with?
- Are sporting facilities and clubs too far away? Would children have to rely on parents to take the

Appendix 3 – Focus Groups Transcript – Year 7 "active girls"

Me: start thinking about what you do in your area, inside school and outside school and how where you live and your family might impact how much sport and physical activity you do and how much you enjoy it and the kind of barriers that might stop you from playing like football, who helps you to play football things like that

Me: so, for the first activity, as you can see, we have got these houses, so I'm going to get you to draw lines, do you know mind maps?

Girls: yeah

Me: ok, I've done an example, I want you to label the types of sport that you do, who takes you how long it takes you to get there, how far away it is and then score out of 10 how much you enjoy it, and how often you do it as well. So I'll put my example here so you can all see.

Me: make it really clear about the type of sport it is, it might be physical activity, different types of exercise, it might just be that you walk to the park every Sunday with your family. Make sure to put everything down that you do that's sports related so you can draw smaller arrows to show that it might be close to home and longer arrows to show that it might be further away. Make sure you are labelling how you get there, who takes you, how far away it is, how often you do it and then out of 10 how much you enjoy it. I've got some coloured pens as well if you want to use these.

Me: ok, if you can draw your school on there as well and tell me about the kinds of thing that you do at school, you know in PE and at break time as well. If you play outside or maybe you just sit in the canteen.

Girl 1: we've got the tennis centre

Girl 2: yeah

Me: yeah, have you got tennis courts?

Girls: yeah

Me: do you do active lunch on there

Girl 3: we just do it on the tennis centre, people do basketball and stuff

Me: do you do ball games and things

Me: so, even if you go swimming or anything like that as well

Girl 2: what if I moved a year ago and I'm still playing for a team down there?

Me: do you still travel there?

Girl: yeah

Me: yeah, put that on but make sure to say it is further away

Me: is that because you like that team?

Girl 2: well like a year ago my mum moved us to here because she used to live here and like I still go see my dad and I still like the team because I've been playing for them for like a year, I used to play for a girls team before that I started when I was like 8 or 9 but that did used to mistreat some people because they used to have like favourites. They used to always put me in like a really bad position.

Girl 4: a defender?

Girl 2: yeah, and I don't like defence

Me: ah ok yeah

Girl 2: yeah, when they put me upfront because I threatened to leave and then I said if you don't put me in a better position I'm going to leave and then they put me up front like 5 weeks later after I said that and I actually felt sick because I wasn't used to it. I felt like I was gunna throw up because

they'd never do that. They did it like 5 minutes towards the end of the game and then I just left because I wanted to play for a mixed team because it is more challenging.

Me: yea, so you play with boys as well?

Girl 2: yeah, I play up front for them

Me: brilliant

Me: do any of you go to the gym?

Girl 2: we go to the fitness room like we used to do that last half term

Me: is that just in school

Girl 2: yeah it over there, like the music room is next to it and we would do like fitness and like team on the machines

Girl 4: I remember that rowing challenge

Girl 2: oh yeah and then we won, and we got to leave like 10 minutes early.

Girl 2: I should make a group chat for all of the girls that are going Barca, and we should have like training sessions

Girl 4: yeah Burnside pitches AstroTurf

Girl 2: you should see the amount of people that went to girls football yesterday because of Barcelona now

Girl 2: we get picked for stuff at school like cross country and everything, so we still do that

Me: Yeah

Girl 4: we are doing football all day like next Wednesday like all the periods we are in we will do football have to come in my PE kit

Me: what do you mainly do in PE, is it football?

Girl 4: it normally different stuff, its like football and have we done rugby?

Girl 2: yeah

Girl 4: we've done cross country, we've done badminton, fitness room

Girl 2: we've done dance, oh I hated dance

Me: do all of you girls prefer outdoor PE?

Girl 2: yeah

Me: do you play out in your street as well at home?

All girls: Yeah, play out all together

Girl 3: like its hard now though because I've like moved to battle hill so we all play in harden

Girl 4: I go to the gym with my dad most of the time

Me: what about your bike, do you ever go on your bike

All girls: oh yeah

Girl 4: I love my bike, I take my bike everywhere

Girl 2: I'm going to get one soon with my money

Me: great

Me: ill give you a few more minutes on this girls and then we will have a chat about it ok

Girl 1: and sometimes I just run after you because you just go off on your bike

Girl 4: I do

Girl 3: we also do futsal

Me; oh yeah, I used to do futsal

Girl 2: we all do it, well I do it because she quit

Girl 4: I went once, and it was really boring

Me: where is the futsal

Girl 2: Monday and Friday in the school sports hall, I also did cricket

Girl 4: didn't we do trampolining in the morning

Girl 2: when will trampolining start

Girl 1: oh yeah because we were mean to do trampolining ages ago but Miss Roderick cancelled it

Girl 4: remember that one time we were doing football and we got told off

Me: that's it few more minutes and you can all talk us through it

Girl 2: I also go in the sauna

Girl 4: what's a sauna

Girl 3: it like a heated room and helps with your pimples and things

Girl 4: oh I hate them

Me: where is the swimming is it close to school?

Girl 2: Blackpool

Girl 3: Burnside

Girl 2: well my dad goes to the gym so me and my step mum just go swimming there

Girl 1: when I go to my brothers I always go on his trampoline

Girl 2: I'm starting for Benfield soon

Me: how do you girls get to school?

Girl 1: walk

Girl 2: bus, I get there earlier bus now so I walk down Howden

Me: yeah

Girl 4: walk

Girl 3: walk

Me: yeah

Girl 2: I'm just going to start biking when I get a bike

Me: right are you all nearly finished?

Girls: yeah

Me: right then lets discuss, if you want to tell me about the things that you have written down so think about these things as well

Girl 1: I've put down football and I play it on the field next to mine and then my dad and my brother do it with us

Me: that's great

Me: what about swimming

Girl 1: I don't go that often; I only like doing it with my friends

Me: then what's this one, is this PE?

Girl 1: yeah

Me: what is your favourite thing to do in PE would you say?

Girl 1: football

Me: what about you

Girl 4: so every time I go out or go to the shop I always go on my bike cos I just love my bike so much

Girl 2: more than me

Girl 4: yeah, more than you

Me: so, you love playing out on your bike and things like that

Girl 4: yeah, I also bring my bag on my back when I'm on my bike and then I play football in the park

Me: oh brilliant

Me: so, is the park nearby you house?

Girls: yeah

Me: yeah, so how far would you say it is away

Girl 2: next to our primary school

Girl 1: its round the corner from me

Me: so, you would say it's easy to get to?

Girl 4: it's like 5 minutes from me

Girl 2: it's like 20 minutes from me but it used to be round the corner because I lived at the top of the street

Me: great, what else have you put down?

Girl 4: the tennis

Me: does anyone play tennis or is that just where you have break time

Girl: we just play football in there at lunch

Girl 4: for PE some people do play tennis

Me: yeah

Girl 4: but we don't

Girl 2: we don't because we are year 7s, we've don't like boxing as well

Me: ok if you want to talk us through yours

Girl 2: I've just started for a girl's team which was like 2 days ago, I used to live in Blackpool like a year ago and I still play for a team in Blackpool it's a mixed team I've been playing for like two years

Me: do you prefer to play mixed

Girl 2: yeah, cos they'd have favourites in all the teams

Girl 2: I play striker and centre mid and I pay for the girl's football team in school as well and go to loads of matches

Me: that's brilliant yeah

Me: do you go and watch matches as well

Girl 2: football matches, well I'm not a Newcastle fan I'm a Liverpool fan so I go sometimes, I've been like anfield 2 times one for was like a tour and one was for an actual match

Me: so, you will travel, you don't mind travelling?

Girl 2: yeah, I don't mind as long as I see Liverpool

Me: what about swimming you've put that down?

Girl: yeah, my dad and step mum take me swimming and now I'm old enough we go in the sauna and the steam room

Me: yeah and you don't mind travelling for that is it a car journey?

Girl 2: yeah my dad drives his van to Carlisle and I get the train so he picks me up and we drive back to Blackpool

Me: so Gwould you say that you go for many walks and things like that?

Girl 4: yeah I do

Me: do you go with friends or family

Girl 2: yeah we all go, just walk around the corner and just talk

Me: so if you're just at home you would prefer to meet up?

Girls: yeah

Girl 4: I asked my mam at like half six and shell say Evy why are you asking at this time

Me: what about you, talk us through yours

Girl 3: so, I've basically just put down all the school things that we have done in PE

Me: What's your favourite thing to do in PE?

Girl 3: probably either football or badminton because like its more you are running around or you are just trying to like have fun

Me: yeah

Girl 3: I've put down what we do in tennis centre and stuff like that, I've also put down swimming because my dad used to take us to like the seas and started getting into surfing and all that and I've also put down that I do football once a week.

Me: and that's for a local team?

Girl 3: yeah

Me: so, do you train outdoors or indoors?

Girl 3: yeah, I do like cadets, so I do some training there as well because I did a tournament there and had some training there and the week after that I did more football and I feel like I did better than usual.

Me: that's great girls. Is there any sports that you think oh I might like to do that but its not accessible sort of in this area?

Girl 2: volleyball

Girl 4: that seems so cool

Girl 2: it does, I really wanna do it in school

Girl 1: beach volleyball

Girl 2: yeah, I do it in the pool with my family because my grandad lives in Spain so we us get all of the nets out

Me: apart from at school is there like indoor tennis courts? Would you say like tennis maybe you need a bit more money for tennis you know to play it?

Girl 2: yeah, you have to buy rackets very frequently

Girl 4: my dad used to play tennis but then he quit he would play for a team a st james'

Me: yeah, I think it's a lot easier to play football isn't it you know just with your friends you don't really have to have much equipment as well its easy to just go and have a kick about

Girl 3: yeah we might use jumpers or something as like goal posts instead of like actual goals

Me: and yeah you can just play in your street can't you as well

Girl 2: yeah there is a community centre next to the park and there is a grass bit next to it and we all just like get our coats and bags and just make nets

Girl 1: but there is also this thing that goes on at the community centre its just like football but then in the community centre as well there's like a little cage and there's like

Girl 4: Cage?

Girl 1: yeah, and there's like posts round it and there's like two and they use them as posts

Me: yeah so you can just do football can't you

Girl 2: yeah, and we just train together, we just talk and go oh lets go out for this training session or something if we are not all busy we just get a football and have a kick about

Me: where do you think most people in year 7 spend most of their free time outside of school?

Girl 4: definitely denby park

Girl 2: its denby primary school down near howden

Me: yeah

Girl 4: its burnside pitches

Girl 2: oh yeah, they all go there, we used to all go Langdale as well

Girl 4: yeah because there's also a football pitch at Langdale and then there's one at burnside and you have to pay like a pound to get into the pitches and for the rest of the day you can just be in there

Me: yeah that's good isn't it quite cheap

Girl 2: we should go swimming one time

Girl 4: I don't know how to, can you's buy us some arm bands

Me: that's great girls so we will move onto sort of talking about Wallsend more specifically now sort of the area around here, so I'm just going to mind map like you've done things that you tell me about wallsend and how you kind of feel about it, it might just be you use some adjectives to tell me

Girl 2: shopping

Girl 1: it can be like sketchy sometimes

Me: what do you mean by sketchy

Girl 1: like around the houses when it gets late

Me: yeah so maybe a bit unsafe

Girl 2: yeah Newcastle town centre is the worst

Girl 4: one times I was getting off the metro and this man who was really scary had like a mask on or something started chasing us so my dad chased him

Me: yeah so you don't want to be out late?

Girl 2: no not by ourselves, like my mum would never let me

Girl 1: my dad doesn't even trust like me and my mam going to meet him if he's in town with my sister we have to ask like my uncle to take us and drive us to Newcastle

Girl 2: it's just scary sometimes being like almost a teenager and there's sketchy people out there which can just take you

Girl 4: especially is you are going around with like girls

Girl 3: I think it's just like our age like people coming towards us like if we were younger we would be more safe because like our parents would be around and as we get older

Girl 4: so we can go more places so there is like more risks

Girl 1: there was like this man just walking behind us because he was the only one off

Girl 2: like as an older sister just makes me feel a bit

Me: a bit uneasy

Girl 2: yeah cos like my sister is almost 5 but like it's just scary sometimes because there just people out there that can just take her in seconds

Girl 4: it is fun though because there like lots of softs plays and places to go swimming

Girl 2: its just I don't trust people if you know what I mean

Me: do you think that it stops you from playing out in your street

Girl 1: sometimes

Me: sometimes yeah, maybe at certain times of the day

Girl 3: at the end of the day at like half six when it starts to get dark well not now but like when it starts to get dark in the winter it starts to get dark like rally early and walking home in like the winter it's just not that's safe

Girl 2: I love the summer though when you get to play out, im always on holiday in the summer and these are like can you play out yeah? And im like no im on holiday

Girl 1: the street is really empty so me and the girl across the road can just go out until like half ten, my mum and her mum are always like in her garden or our garden so we will just be out until like half ten in the street

Me: so is there like shops and other things like not sport related so paint me a picture of this area

Girl 2: um so you get off the bus and like the bus stops and there like a massive shopping centre called the forum and there's loads of like little shops next to it like thrift shops

Girl 1: and up here there's like little corner shops and lie little restaurants and pubs

Me: and cinemas?

Girls: yeah

Girl 4: curry's PC world

Girl 2: and pizza hut

Girl 3: what's the new one, 5 guys

Me: so is there an indoor sports centre that's kind of like the main sports centre

Girl 1: yeah the community centre

Girl 2: yeah I don't really go there that much but I go to kicks sometimes

Girl 4: its not on anymore

Girl 2: yeah I know so we don't really go there anymore

Me: so how do you think it could be improved?

Girl 2: like more sports extracurricular activities

Me: more different sports, more variation?

Girl 1: that place that we used to play kicks they are putting AstroTurf in there now so it will probably be open more

Me: great

Girl 2: of course when we leave it has to be new

Girl 1: yeah when we left the primary its all brand new

Girl 2: but wallsend is good though

Me: so what would kind of be your perfect place what sort of things would you add in?

Girl 4: like security cameras

Me: to make it a more safe place

Girl 3: yeah there more like younger people round this area

Girl 1: there's like more people my age like more people going out

Girl 2: I think if I owned a sports facility I would get nets for volleyball more different equipment and like more staff

Me: yeah because you need good equipment and good facilities to be able to do things properly don't you

Girl 2: yeah and more staff

Me: yeah like more coaches

Girl 2: yeah because if you had like one coach that does everything who does different times it can be overwhelming, they cant do everything

Girl 1: yeah in the summer there is like loads of different clubs on so they'd get everything

Me: did you ever go to summer camps and things like that

Girls: no

Girl 4: I went to one once but I went home because it was scary

Girl 1: yeah my mam doesn't trust them

Girl 2: yeah when I was like 10 when I lived in Blackpool there was like this park and there was like a green thing next to it and I used to think the grinch lived in there but beside the point but there was like a club thing there where you could go for the day and then they'd pick you up and me and my cousins used to go there

Girl 4: yeah like what's it called a day-care

Girl 2: I'm not a baby

Girl 2: yeah and there was like a pool table and everything

Girl 2: I love pool and I love darts as well

Girl 1: yeah when I've got darts at home me and my dad play and I kinda hit a dart off his head

Girl 2: I got one stuck in the wall

Me: do you spend a lot of time at home indoors as well

Girls: yeah

Girl 1: yeah I spend time like with my dad because my mam is always like working cos she's at college and like works at a school so I'm always with my dad and my grandma.

Girl 2: I never really with my dad because he's always in Blackpool

Girl 1: yeah in the summer I normally just sit in the garden, its way too hot in the house

Girl 2: I might not go Spain in the summer I dunno

Girl 3: yeah when you wake up in the summer it's like really cold

Girl 1: I hate the summer, I love the summer but like I hate it at the same time because my mum always wakes up at half six saying get up now it's the summer and im like no

Girl 2: if you play football in the summer like my eczema gets really bad like its all over my arms all over my legs

Me: do you think that the weather stops you like if its raining all the time

Girl 2: yeah I remember once I went to this field when it was really really hot it was like 30 degrees in Newcastle and we went Langdale and there was this massive pitch and we were just playing full on matches and the boys were like running up and down.

Me: so now I want us to think about what helps us and what stops us so the barriers and what helps us facilitators, so I want you to think about things like you've said safety that would be a barrier and sort of the biggest barriers for you the biggest things that help you so it might be your parents and things like that they might help you to get to football they've drive you think about what's not a problem for you and think about you know could there be more things if your area which could help you participate more in sport so could you just shout out some barriers and that help you to play sport

Girl 1: things that help you is your parents like kind of encourage you

Me: yeah like if you've got sporty parents

Girl 3: yeah my dad's really sporty he does football, some rugby and he does golf as well

Girl 4: my dad wanted to do football, but his dad wasn't there to encourage him but now he wants to do it

Girl 2: my dad is stupid he broke his elbow

Girl 1; my dad did football when he was younger, he did rugby when he was younger and then he also did tennis when he was younger and so my dad encouraged me

Me: yeah, so if you've got good role models you know in your family

Girl 3: yeah, my dad's like done stuff he's got himself into cadets and to show his daughters us how the world actually is and what you could do

Me: yeah exactly

Girl 1: yeah, and me brothers girlfriend encourages us because she did sports when she was younger as well

Girl 2: yeah my nana has always been there for me and my dad as well, like obviously when I moved he was a bit but my nana is always there for me she's always like oh why don't you do this an go play out and you can sleep at mine if you wanna play out and if you want to do football and everything and I'm like well I can't really do that at the moment. And she's always been my number 1 supporter other than my mates and my dad

Me: oh, that is brilliant isn't it especially for girls I think you need a good support system in sport as well don't you

Girl 2: its hard

Girl 1: it's a thing that the lads support us as well so when we got to Barcelona

Girl 2: they are all like yay

Girl 4: they are kind of mean but when it comes to football they are nice

Girl 2: they are kind of rough in football but we are just rough back

Girl 1: when it comes to football they act like your best friend again

Girl 2: well if you attack on them wrong they go eh!

Girl 1: they are always wanting free kicks

Girl 2: they dive and cry like the other day I kind of shoulder barged him and he went flying to the ground and he went ref that girls just done something to me, I was like calm down

Me: so what about the cost of sports do you think that that might hinder, might stop you?

Girl 1: yeah, my dad always complains because they are too expensive

Me: yeah

Girl 3: yeah, just like that like football boots I know that they could be like some of them are like really colourful and all that I think the price could be put down because some people now need new boots

Girl 2: yeah if its like Ronaldo's or messis it's like 200 pound plus but if its just a pair of football boots just any its probably like just 20 or 30 pound but I save up for mine

Girl 2: I played outdoor gold the other day and basically it took me 8 tries to get it into the hole, I suck at golf

Girl 1: I don't know how to play golf I don't know the rules

Me: so I've given you some barriers and some things that help people in general to play sport and physical activity, so just in your pairs if we go you two and you two.

Girl 4: what's green space?

Me: good question that's like parks and fields anything green really, yeah so if you want to come up with three barriers and three things that help you – the main 3 that you think for people your age. Yeah, if you want to come up with them in your pairs and write them on one of your sheets on the back. Does that make sense.

Me: you can look at these as well if you are struggling for ideas

Me: do you two want to tell us yours first

Girl 4: we have got mobile phones because people always have them and then just get distracted by them

Me: yeah, so like screen time

Girl 3: she looked at me when she said that

Girl 4: because you carry your phone around when we are doing football

Girl 3: I actually haven't done that the last few weeks I'm proud if myself

Girl 1: no transport

Girl 3: I don't really thing that transport is a big thing because if its more local then it will be better

Me: yeah so you are more likely to go if its local

Girl 3: yeah

Girl 1: then, we have got support of friends and family and transport to get there

Me: so it can be a barrier and something that helps you transport

Girl 4: and the green space have local fields and local parks

Me: great, what about you two?

Girl 2: so, for barriers we did like older people like older boys and older girls

Girl 3: sometimes they get a bit rough

Girl 2: if you do something wrong like straight away they don't like you

Me: like gangs would you say

Girl 2: yeah gangs that is what I mean

Girl 2: like litter as well because when you are trying to play on the pitches there is loads of litter everywhere and you cant really do anything

Me: yeah when you feel like its not a clean space its like you don't want to be there?

Girl 2: Yeah and we want more activities in the local area

Me: yeah like organised things?

Girl 3: yeah like organised things and more activities

Me: yeah like rather than you just doing your own thing?

Girls: yeah

Girl 2: and positives are my mates because they always encourage me to do everything like if I'd do something I shouldn't really be doing, and they go alright you need to just put your head up and carry on

Girl 2: and support and confidence

Girl 2: and confidence as well because people can lose their self of steam when they are playing sports

Girl 3: especially in sports when. People comment on the way they are playing. I mean sometimes its like key points when you should try and get better in training but when people say stuff like oh you're really bad at this

Me: yeah it can put you off cant it especially with football

Girl 2: especially because we are girls because the boys usually do it really made me feel more confident because you know the girls euros and they won it, its usually like oh the boys are going to win

Me: I think the more girls that play the better

Girl 2: yeah the better because they don't really get paid much when they are footballers but boys get paid like 2 million a week

Girl 1: like Newcastle girls are like winning every match

Me: yeah and no one knows

Girl 1: yeah I was there on Sunday and they literally like 6-1

Girl 2: its not fair

Girl 3: it's like if you're not encouraged to like do something how do you know that you would like to do it

Girl 2: say it's we are losing and someone's got their head down they need encouragement to like carry on

Me: yeah I think the more women and girls we get in sport

Girl 2: people will recognise them

Me: yeah and that will encourage more girls in the future wont it

Me: who would you say is your sporting role model

Girl 1: my dad

Girl 3: my dad does anything, he doesn't mind taking us anywhere, hes mostly busy and I hardly see him but like, I normally see him on a Monday and a Wednesday because we do cadets together and we do whatever like sports

Girl 2: my dad for me, because even though I only see him every half term because we moved he still makes time for me he still wants me to have a good relationship

Girl 3: yeah, split parents is a lot harder

Girl 2: yeah its harder cos its like oh you like that parent better oh you like that parent better

Me: yeah and one might be more sport focused but you don't see them as much

Girl 2: yeah

Girl 4: yeah I'd say my dad he's trying to get us to join all these football teams but they are too far away

Girl 3: yeah he's encouraging you and giving you the confidence that you need

Girl 2: yeah and if you cant make it that coach has like a full on 7 seater van

Me: yeah sometimes you need someone else to like get you going

Girl 2: yeah you need that confidence

Girl 1: yeah my brother is the only one that drives so it's me my dad and my brother that always go out

<u>Appendix 4 – Interview Transcript - Physical Education Staff Member</u>

Me: how would you kind of describe Wallsend and how do you think the children kind of feel about it who come to this school?

Participant: I think doing these focus groups with you has kind of opened my eyes a bit, more than what I knew, Wallsend didn't have the best name from what I'd heard and staff CPDs. But like some of the things the kids have said I was really surprised that they couldn't even go out in the park without feeling safe. So yeah, I had heard about its reputation but hearing it really puts it into perspective

Me: yeah, I think there were similar things that cropped up in all of the focus groups

Participant: yeah, it was all of the safety wasn't it

Me: yeah, definitely and the litter and things they talked about as well

Participant: yeah, the maintenance of the parks

Me: yeah, and like going out in their streets and gardens

Me: yeah, so do you think that there is a sense of community around sport as well like in the area or is it kind of like people aren't really bothered?

Participant: I'm not actually from Wallsend so I don't know the area that well that isn't around the school, but I know when we go to other schools to do the extracurricular its always ran really well like the central venues. There is a good sense of community when I take the football girls they will know some of the other people from the other teams who they play with outside of school and you can tell they've had like friendships from there

Me: yeah so they do see each other outside of school in a sporting environment

Participant: yeah they do that but I don't know much else about it really

Me: yeah, so we've talked about safety but to what extent do you think that it stops children from playing sport like in their area

Participant: I think probably quite a lot based on what the kids were saying, I know like the year 7 group who were active they were saying they all played out together. So that's great if they all live near each other where they are comfortable in their street. But the rest of them said that they weren't happy kind of going out in their street so it will definitely restrict them because they won't just take a ball and play at the park or something like they were saying about their parents they don't want them to go as well

Me: yeah, after a certain time as well

Participant: yeah definitely

Me: I think they talked a lot about like anti-social behaviour and crimes that had happened in the area

Participant: yeah, I know

Me: yeah, so kind of just to talk about where they are participating as well. Where do you think that they are participating in most? Or do you see children in the park and things like that, do you see them out in the street?

Participant: To be honest I haven't really because I will just, the most will probably see them is driving to like an after school extracurricular match or something like going past the fields. I don't see many. If I'm honest most of the sport that a lot of them do will be at the after-school clubs or I know a lot of the girls and boys go to after school football and netball. But there were a few girls asking at netball club last term if I knew of any netball clubs because I think they were looking and they were struggling to find one.

Me: yeah, so theres kind of not that opportunity

Participant: yeah, because they were clearly interested but were struggling to find one

Me: yeah, it might be there but not kind of popular amongst their age group as well is it

Participant: yeah, like with football there are more like clubs because it just seems to be more popular

Me: yeah, it is the obvious choice isn't it. Yeah like with other sports like tennis as well there is the tennis centre here but like where else is there for them to do it

Participant: yeah, like you were saying as well, its more expensive so if cost is an issue

Me: yeah definitely. So do you think there is enough green space in the area, like fields, parks and football pitches and stuff

Participant: I think there is quite a lot of parks from what I can think of

Me: yeah I think they mentioned quite a lot of different parks as well

Participant: I know there a big, I don't think its part of a school, a long the road there a really big field there. Im not sure if there is football goals on it. But they do seem to mention a lot of different parks so I think there must be quite a few. But whether its like football goals or whether its just baby swings like what they were saying

Me: yeah they kind of mentioned that there is not enough for their age group, it kind of stops at a young age like the facilities near by. So do you think the guidelines, like outside of school its 30 minutes and 30 minutes in school. To what extent do you think they are doing enough physical activity, they are getting their 30 minutes in school?

Participant: I think a lot of the ones who come to the extra-curricular who I see the most. I think they will because they come to quite a few

Me: yeah so they will do them on different days

Participant: yeah so they could come to rounders and then netball and football and I think a lot of them play outside of school as well so I think they will but I do think there will be a massive chunk that don't who just go to school and go home again, so yeah I think there will be a chunk that do and a chunk that don't

Me: yeah there will be people missed out because after school is not compulsory and then its just two hours of pe through the week. Yeah so do you think the area could do more to promote sport, like have more clubs. Basically, how do you think the area could be improved?

Participant: I think like the students were saying the maintenance of parks really could be improved if they are not feeling safe like the security, I know that's money but if they aren't feeling safe to go there

Me: yeah, I think a few said about cameras and things

Participant: yeah and then maybe just like I said they couldn't find a close by netball club so things like that so a bit more promotion for things like that, but for football there is a lot of opportunity. We have recently but some posters up in the changing room for like boxing and stuff like that outside of school to try and promote those different things.

Me: yeah I suppose like coaches came into school to give a talk, do they do things like that?

Participant: yeah we do we've had a tennis coach come in, we've had a tennis coach who uses our tennis centre so he's put on tennis extra-curricular. They don't often come in just for a chat, it will be like a work shop or a session kind of thing

Me: yeah like actually doing something. So to what extent do the kids enjoy pe, do you think most of them enjoy it or is there a sense of its not their favourite thing to do in school

Participant: I think it's a right mixture, because there are those where any chance to do it in school they want to be going on any extra-curricular. Like today for example we have had a dodgeball trip and for the kids who aren't as like involved with sport we have tried to encourage more, just for a bit of fun. I think once they start doing it they might actually enjoy it but I think in the lessons its like if your friends aren't enjoying it

Me: yeah, just purely focusing on participation. Because in PE there is still that learning aspect to it isn't there, to learn things about PE, its not always about just enjoying it and doing what they enjoy as well. Sometimes its too strict to the curriculum, whereas are they actually doing what they want. I think especially girls as well because they don't always want to do like rugby and things

Participant: yeah we were just on a football CPD recently and we were shown tasks where it was to do with football but you didn't have to have a ball all the time. It was about special awareness. Its about getting them to do it without realising they are doing it.

Me: yeah, even things like Zumba and a lot of girls like the gym.

Participant: yeah, just dance is popular

Me: yeah. So just to talk about the barriers and things that help them to participate. What do you think are the key influences are, do you think it is the place or like cost, transport, family and friends

Participant: Based on these groups I think safety and so place would be the biggest barrier because nearly every single one of them, I think one person out of all the group said they feel safe. So I think that would come into it and I think cost would come into it as well because it is limiting what sports you can do and the indoor facilities cost as well, I think its just a mix of everything really

Me: yeah definitely. Do you think there is enough indoor facilities?

Participant: I know that Hadrian leisure and burnside is indoor. But im not fully aware of everything around here.

Me: yeah do you get the impression that they have to travel.

Participant: yeah, because I can't think. I think Hadrian leisure is close but Benfield you would be travelling quite a bit

Me: do you think children parents promote sport?

Participant: yeah I think they will but even some of the girls who come to football struggle to get to one outside of school because her parents don't drive so if it is further away that will make it more difficult for them