

EVALUATION OF THIS GIRL CAN NEWCASTLE

FINAL REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



RISE.



Executive Summary

Introduction

This Girl Can Newcastle (TGCN) was a 15-month programme aiming to support women and girls facing barriers to being physically active. Rise North East (henceforth referred to as 'Rise') and Newcastle City Council commissioned Urban Foresight to evaluate the TGCN programme. The evaluation set out to understand the impact of the programme on the local ecosystem and capture learnings on an ongoing basis to help shape programme delivery and future interventions.

This report introduces the programme, outlines the 15-month evaluation process and shares the findings and recommendations for future work supporting women and girls' physical activity.

The TGCN programme

TGCN was developed by Rise and Newcastle City Council with consideration of the trends around physical inactivity and the need for women in Newcastle to have access to opportunities to be physically active in ways which work for them, in the communities they live in.

The programme aimed to:

1. create a network of Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations and volunteers who can own and empower appropriate and accessible physical activity opportunities for women and girls across Newcastle; and
2. upskill professionals within services relevant to women and girls in the city (e.g. Family Hubs) and leisure operators to be advocates for physical activity through both their interactions with women and girls and how they practically support more women and girls to use their community assets and services.

Rise recruited a dedicated TGCN Coordinator to lead programme activities and support the achievement of these aims. The TGCN Coordinator targeted three groups of women through the programme – pregnant women and new mums, women from ethnically diverse communities and women 55+ with a focus on those from communities with the highest levels of inactivity.

Evaluation methodology

Urban Foresight co-designed the evaluation approach with Rise and Newcastle City Council. Sport England's National Evaluation and Learning Partnership (NELP) conditions for tackling inequalities in physical activity were used as the foundation for the approach. Five of the NELP conditions were identified as being relevant to the TGCN and shaped the evaluation framework and questions. Data was then gathered on an ongoing basis between January 2025 and January 2026 through monthly project team meetings, Coordinator insight reports, ripple effect mapping (REM) workshops¹, training participant surveys, stakeholder focus groups and case studies.

Urban Foresight used deductive analysis to understand learnings and measure impacts in alignment with the evaluation questions. Inductive analysis was also used to allow for unexpected themes to emerge.

¹ REM is a systems evaluation method that was used to map the actions of the TGCN Coordinator and programme partners. Alongside the impacts of these actions. It is useful for monitoring programme activities over time, evidencing wider impacts and visualising the whole journey of the programme.

Key Findings

There are five key findings from the evaluation to spotlight.

TGCN supported stakeholders to increase their knowledge and confidence to promote physical activity with the people they support.

The programme upskilled 97 stakeholders through the Physical Activity Clinical Champions training. However, there is opportunity to better support the implementation of this learning and address other capacity gaps e.g., cultural competencies.

TGCN created early ripples of change which are enabling leadership, collaboration and community-led action in the local ecosystem.

Four case studies illustrate these early impacts and the role of the TGCN Coordinator in facilitating change.

The 'right' TGCN Coordinator was a critical success factor to creating early impacts.

The TGCN Coordinator role provided the dedicated capacity needed to effectively implement the facilitation-based approach and served as a known 'face' to connect with. Her identity as a woman of an ethnic minority community and her professional experiences in community development also meant she was well-suited to the role.

Systemic barriers caused roadblocks to TGCN's progress, and these challenges are likely to continue without significant changes to ecosystem culture and organisational processes.

TGCN has faced systemic barriers such as short-term funding, misconceptions around barriers to physical activity and a lack of collective knowledge building and sharing.

TGCN Coordinator facilitated learning opportunities and successfully shared insights she had gathered with the wider ecosystem.

This has informed Our Decade of Movement and Rise work moving forward. However, the knock-on effect of short-term funding and a facilitation rather than delivery model should inform how future work on women and girls' physical activity is positioned.

Conclusions

Our evaluation concluded that TGCN acted as an important step in the journey to embedding a whole systems approach to supporting women and girls in Newcastle.

Recommendations

Urban Foresight identified five recommendations to support the next phase of work.

The recommendations outlined are expected to enable Newcastle City Council, VCFSE organisations and other ecosystem partners to continue to maximise their impact in supporting women and girls to thrive.

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Recommendations	Summary	Who	When
1/ Crafting the narrative	Creating clear communications to support the transition from the TGCN programme to a more distributed model of intervention.	Rise and Newcastle City Council	Now and on an on-going basis to reinforce the messaging
2/ Building on existing momentum	Growing trust that women and girls' physical activity will be a significant part of the work in Newcastle moving forward.	Rise and Newcastle City Council	Now
3/ Strategic stratification of partners	Tailoring training opportunities to the ecosystems' needs to ensure effective use of capacity.	Rise and Newcastle City Council	One to two years
4/ Deepening the impact of PACC training	Building in support e.g., follow-up sessions and implementation tools, to help participants embed their learning.	National PACC team and Sport England	Now
5/ Investment for change	Creating longer-term collaborative funding opportunities that align with the real pace of change.	Sport England and other funders in the North East	Now



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