

**REPORT:**

# **OPENING SCHOOL FACILITIES IMPACT CELEBRATION CONFERENCE**

**SHARE, CELEBRATE & SUSTAIN**

**MARCH 2025**

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# **RISE.**

Headline Sponsor:



Associate Sponsors:



# WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE DO AND WHY WE DO IT.

## WHO WE ARE

We're a leading health and wellbeing charity – and we're passionate about the role that physical activity can play in making a difference to the communities that need it most.

## WHAT WE DO

Our team of friendly experts works closely with regional partners across health, education, transport and more – to show how physical activity can tackle inequalities and help solve some of the biggest issues affecting our communities.

We play a key role in:

- Providing access to employment and training
- Improving mental health
- Enhancing child development and education
- Creating healthy and sustainable places in which to live and work
- Integrating activity for health improvement, prevention and condition management
- Supporting the health and wellbeing of the workforce

We also advocate for policy change, share best practice, and provide insight, guidance and support.

## WHY WE DO IT

Our population in the North East of England lives with significant health, social, economic and environmental inequalities.

And we know that physically inactive populations are often the most marginalised – and most likely to be adversely affected by inequalities.

# OPENING SCHOOL FACILITIES IMPACT CELEBRATION CONFERENCE, 25<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2025

## Opening School Facilities Programme

Over the past two years, Opening School Facilities (OSF) has helped us distribute up to £3 million DfE funding to 87 schools across Tyne & Wear and Northumberland. Helping to break down barriers and open doors to new extra-curricular physical health and wellbeing activities for more children, young people and local communities to get active, engaged and connected. In particular, supporting those impacted by health, social or economic inequalities living in our most underserved communities.

## Sponsors

A special thank you to our headline sponsor, The [North East Combined Authority](#) and our two associate sponsors, [The Education Network](#) and [Enrich Education](#). With their support we are proud to deliver an event that recognises and celebrates the dedication and hard work across our OSF schools in delivering engaging, needs-led opportunities for physical activity in our region.

## Market Place

During the day, we were fortunate to welcome a variety of organisations and services who shared ways they can support schools and stakeholders, colleagues and the children and young people you work with.

A big thank you to [Enrich Education](#), [The Education Network](#), [Inspired for Change](#), [Youth Sport Trust](#), [The Key](#), [Children's Cancer North](#), [Ability Consultants](#) and [Rise Workplace Wellbeing](#), and [Safeguarding Welfare Teams](#).



## Conference Overview

**OSF updates** – Louise Laws, Dan Gray, Paul Biddle & Claire Lee

**Keynote & Workshops** – Big Ian Donaghy (A Budget of Nowt) & Zoe Hodges (Maximising School Facilities for Sustainable Physical Activity)

**Sharing, Learning and Reflection Activity** – Reflecting on challenges, success and a future beyond OSF.

**School Performances** – Whytrig Middle School, John Spence High School & Carville Primary School.

**Youth Voice** – Lucy Green, Excelsior Academy & Jarrow School

**School Case Studies** – Sammuel Rosenthal (Ateres High School), Wallsend Children's Community, Andrew Dixon (Kepier)

## Rise OSF Impact Award Presentation

The award categories:

- Primary School Project Impact Award
- Secondary School Project Impact Award
- Community Impact Award
- Youth Leadership Impact Award
- Sustainability Impact Award
- Partnership and Collaboration Impact Award
- Breaking Down Barriers Impact Award



## Keynote & Speakers

### Big Ian Donaghy – A Budget of Nowt



In his keynote, Big Ian Donaghy highlighted how change and problem-solving can be achieved even without funding, introducing the concept of "skill-anthropy"—using creativity and available resources to make a meaningful impact. He outlined key prerequisites for success, including recognising the importance of people, a commitment to change, strong networks, teamwork, and the willingness to take action. Ian showcased examples such as the Christmas Presence in York (a dinner for those spending Christmas alone, organised with donations), A Night

to Remember (a volunteer-run musical evening), and the Dementia is a Team Game video campaign. He also referenced a crime reduction project in secondary schools that continued after the end of its Home Office funding. Through these examples, Ian inspired schools to adapt and find solutions within tight budget constraints, especially as the Opening School Facilities funding has now come to an end. His message encouraged schools to think creatively and utilise community resources to maintain and sustain impactful programmes going forward.

### Zoe Hodges (Youth Sport Trust) - Maximising School Facilities for Sustainable Physical Activity

Zoe facilitated a workshop around enhancing access, inclusivity, and the legacy of physical activity in schools beyond the OSF programme. Participants took part in a walk around the grounds of the hotel and reflected upon the successes of OSF in their school or community and what challenges they face going forward. Zoe discussed how schools could leverage their facilities to drive sustainable physical activity opportunities.

The workshop explored innovative strategies for maximizing existing spaces, engaging communities, and creating long-term impact. The workshop equipped attendees with the tools to enhance access, inclusivity, and the legacy of physical activity in their schools.





## School Performances

One of the most entertaining parts of the entire conference were the amazing performances by three of our OSF schools. For many of the children and young people involved, this was their first time showcasing the talents and skills developed through OSF projects in front of an audience. Their passion and excitement to be involved in the day really shone through and reminded us all of the potential that can be unleashed through exposing children and young people to the opportunity of physical activity.



Whytrig Middle School's (Northumberland) samba band, WHAMBA!!!, wowed us all with their opening performance. Their first ever public performance even caught the attention of the Northumberland Gazette. [See here](#)

John Spence High School (North Tyneside) brought together poetry and high-energy dance moves to showcase an uplifting performance.

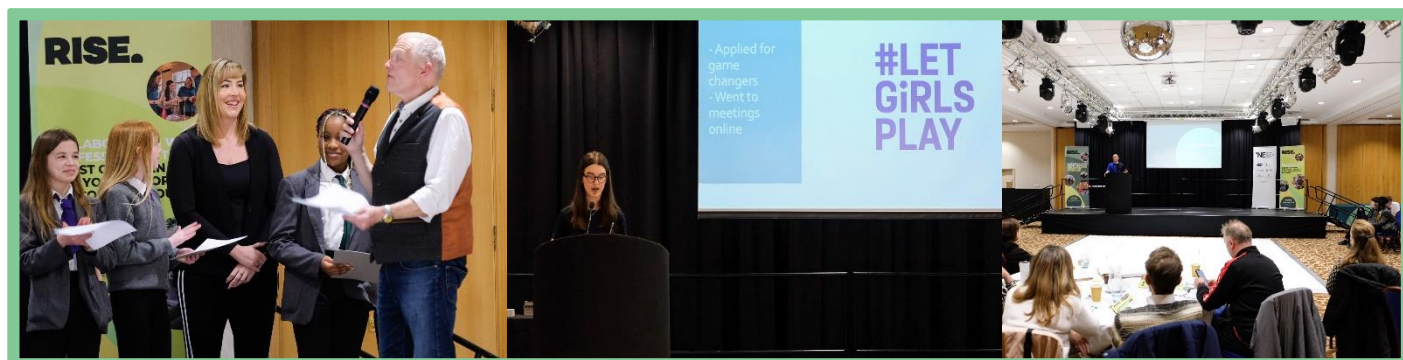


North Tyneside, Carville Primary School's cheerleaders brought smiles to our faces with their performance highlighting the diversity and unity within their school.



**A massive thank you to all of the young performers who brought smiles to all of our faces!**

## Youth Voice



It was an honour to welcome the inspiring and confident voices from Excelsior Academy, Lucy Green and Jarrow School, who shared first-hand experience of the impact OSF funding has made to children & young people and highlighted the positive outcomes and behaviour change that physical activity can bring.

### **Lucy Green (Durham School, formerly Castle View Enterprise Academy)**

Lucy Green spoke about how playing, coaching, and campaigning for girls' football has shaped her confidence and motivation. She led initiatives such as organising a football festival and changing team kit to be period-appropriate, which boosted participation. Lucy also highlighted the role of supportive teachers and explained the goals of the #LetGirlsPlay campaign, aiming to ensure all girls have equal access to football in schools.

### **Liam Roachford (Jarrow School, South Tyneside)**

Liam Roachford shared a youth voice video showing the positive impact of OSF-funded projects on wellbeing, confidence, and physical activity. He emphasised that the funding was essential to the programme's success, which encouraged continued activity beyond school through its inclusive, social, and motivational format. Students also developed leadership and communication skills through their involvement.

### **Excelsior Academy (Newcastle), alongside Michael Johnson (Head of Grainger Park Boxing Club)**

Michael described how OSF funding enabled the launch of a boxing club that expanded opportunities beyond football. Students explained they have benefitted through improved fitness, confidence, and social skills, with many also succeeding in competitions. Michael noted that the free, inclusive nature of the project and the dedication of passionate coaches were key to its success, helping students engage both in and outside of school. The children passionately spoke about their experiences in their dance sessions with special recognition to their inspiring teacher, Chantal McCartney.

**A huge thank you to all the very brave young people who shared their inspiring and honest experiences of physical activity and wellbeing with us all.**

## School Case Studies

### Samuel Rosenthal (Ateres Girls' High School, Gateshead)

Samuel Rosenthal thanked Rise and the DfE for their support through OSF funding, which allowed Ateres Girls' High School to launch two key projects aimed at motivating girls to be more active outside of their statutory PE lessons. Recognising that the school's Jewish community was health-conscious but that most girls only



participated in compulsory PE, Samuel used the funding to introduce the Daily Mile for 120 KS3 students and Couch to 5K for 80 KS4 students. These initiatives faced challenges such as poor weather and safety concerns, but the school addressed them by purchasing second-hand gym equipment and integrating cultural and academic calendars into the projects.

The funding was also used to incentivise participation with rewards like personalised water bottles, smoothie machines, and fun activities such as trampolining and zorbing. The school outsourced parts of the programme's delivery to local fitness clubs to ensure quality and expertise. The legacy of these initiatives includes the establishment of an OSF-funded gym, improved mental, physical, and spiritual benefits for the girls, and a wider ripple effect as families of the girls have also become more active. Many of these programmes will continue, contributing to long-term health improvements within the community.



**Paula McCormack, Kate Lockhart & Gill Gray  
(Wallsend Children's Community - North Tyneside)**

Paula McCormack discussed the collective impact of Wallsend Children's Community (WCC), who support a range of initiatives across nine local schools. These schools received a collective total of £290,000 OSF funding across the programme.

WCC acted as a backbone organisation, coordinating efforts to create a common agenda for change, while engaging regularly with children, young people, and parents. Key activities included the establishment of a football academy, a dance teacher as part of an extended HAF programme, after-school clubs, and other projects like a bike initiative and girls' football to name a few. The focus was on ensuring open communication, shared measurement of data, and mutually reinforcing activities to drive long-term change and impact.

However, the initiative faced several challenges, including the need to mobilise schools, prepare service providers, and ensure sustainability once the funding ended. To address these challenges, WCC worked on developing the schools' ability to evaluate and bid for funding independently. One of the lasting outcomes of the OSF funding was the creation of the Wallsend Sporting Collaborative, which continues to support various sports across schools, develop youth voice, and maintain connections with 32 community champions. This network helps meet the identified needs of the community, ensuring that the programmes continue to benefit local children and families.



The **Magic Movers** programme, shared by Kate Lockhart from Little Big Mouth, and Gill Gray from WCC, focuses on addressing delayed development in early years children by promoting physical activity and increasing parental involvement in their child's learning. A key strength of the programme was its emphasis on engaging parents, which helped

improve children's physical development, including gross and fine motor skills and balance. For children in Year 2, the programme also worked on emotional regulation, with parents reporting increased confidence, better parenting strategies, and improvements in emotional regulation, physical health and wellbeing

## Andrew Dixon (Kepier School, Sunderland)



Andrew Dixon from Kepier School shared the aims and outcomes of their OSF-funded project, which focused on increasing post-COVID attendance, boosting girls' participation, and expanding community use of school facilities.

Guided by student voice, staff interests, and available space, the school

introduced a range of activities including fitness sessions, netball, futsal, archery, and karate.

The impact has been significant, with hundreds of students, particularly girls, regularly attending these sessions. Community engagement also grew, with local clubs using the fitness room, courts, and floodlit fields for activities such as rugby, netball, and archery.

Despite challenges around staffing and raising awareness, the house of points charts for rewards, and social media were used to promote participation. Learner feedback highlighted the positive effect of improved facilities on enjoyment, personal development, and increased engagement in physical activity. *'The futsal equipment has allowed me to try a new sport. I've really enjoyed it.'*

**A special thank you to all of the guest speakers who shared their valuable experience in collaboratively overcoming challenges and the impact the OSF funding has made to support sustainable change in their schools and communities.**

## Opening School Facilities Impact Awards

As the Opening School Facilities programme has come to its conclusion, Rise's OSF Awards take the opportunity to reflect, recognise and celebrate the achievements and impact that you have all made to so many children, young people and families across Northumberland and Tyne and Wear. Your hard work, determination and dedication to your projects have made all of this possible.

We'd like to thank all of the schools who have been nominated for the awards, it was an incredibly difficult decision as there were so many fantastic projects, but there could only be one winner per category.

We are proud to share the winners for each of our categories:



### Rise Opening School Facilities Impact Award Winners

Primary School Project of the Programme	Keser Girls' School
Secondary School Project of the Programme	Kepier
Youth Leadership Award	Ateres Girls High School
Sustainability Award	John Spence Community High School
Partnership and Collaboration Award	Carville Primary School
Community Impact Award	North Gosforth Academy
Breaking Down Barriers Award	Kielder Primary School

### School Shortlisted Nominees:

Battle Hill Primary School, Jarrow School, Greenhead C of E Primary School, Henshaw C of E Primary School, Whytrig Middle School, Denbeigh Community Primary School, Excelsior Academy, Kenton School and Berwick Academy

## Conference Feedback

### Participant Survey

Survey Response	Agreed (Definitely or to some extent)
The conference has improved my knowledge and understanding	95.4%
The conference has provided me with an opportunity to network, share ideas and learn from other schools and organisations at the event	95.4%
The conference has inspired my practice and future plans for my role and school/organisation	95.4%
The conference has provided practical advice and ideas to take back to my school/organisation	100%

***"We really enjoyed this event! It was professionally run and Big Ian was a true inspiration!"***

***"Such an outstanding event put on - so much to learn from and a lot of food for thought"***

***"This has changed my mindset towards setbacks and to just try overcome them"***





Your words to describe the event

**Motivating**  
**Inclusive** **Moving**  
**Friendly** **Emotional**  
**Fun** **Inspiring**  
**Amazing** **Informative**  
**Purposeful**  
**Rewarding**  
**Engaging** **Clear**  
**Invigorating**

# RISE.

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