

Early Years Physical Activity Report

2023/24



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1. Introduction

Childhood obesity is a complex issue requiring multiple levels of intervention. Prevention is key to tackling obesity, starting at a prenatal stage, as we know that obesity in childhood tracks into adulthood, with learned behaviours continuing throughout life.

Physical activity in early childhood, encompassing the following, is crucial for children's holistic development:

1. **Physical health** - Regular physical activity in early years helps in the development of motor skills, strengthens bones and muscles, and reduces the risk of obesity. Physically active children are more likely to maintain a healthy weight throughout childhood and into adulthood.
2. **Mental health** - Physical activity is associated with improved mental health outcomes in children, including reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety. It also promotes better sleep patterns, which are essential for overall well-being.
3. **Cognitive development** - Engaging in physical activity stimulates brain development and enhances cognitive abilities such as attention, memory, and problem-solving skills. This can positively impact academic performance later in life.
4. **Social skills** - Participating in physical activities with peers fosters social interaction, cooperation, and teamwork. It helps children learn important social skills such as sharing, taking turns, and resolving conflicts.
5. **Long-term habits** - Early exposure to physical activity lays the foundation for lifelong healthy habits. Children who develop a positive attitude towards exercise are more likely to continue being active into adulthood, reducing their risk of chronic diseases.

Government Recommendations

Government recommendations are that children aged one to five should be physically active for 180 minutes each day and that children over five should be active for at least 60 minutes a day (Chief Medical Officer's physical activity guidelines 2019). The benefits of physical activity are well evidenced and include:

- Maintaining a healthy weight.
- Supporting brain development.
- Improved cardiovascular function.
- Helping to develop social skills, self-esteem, and emotional well-being.
- Enhancing bone health and muscular development.
- Giving children the skills and confidence they need to continue an active lifestyle through childhood and beyond.

2. Service requirements



During the period from April 2023 to March 2024 (and subsequently for a further period beyond that), Herts Sport & Physical Activity Partnership (HSP) was tasked by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) with promoting healthy lifestyles amongst children.

The contract awarded to HSP encompassed The Daily Mile™ and early years physical activity, with the aim of facilitating physical activity for those children who experience inequalities and who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

There were two elements to the contract:

1. Supporting early years settings* to engage in physical activity for under fives, through promoting an early years physical activity package, providing opportunities for staff to develop skills and knowledge around early years physical activity and early years physical activity promotion across Hertfordshire.
2. Supporting primary schools on The Daily Mile™ database to continue to deliver the initiative within their schools, alongside engaging new schools previously not signed up to The Daily Mile™ and promoting of the initiative across Hertfordshire.

Recommendations from the previous contract

Building on previous recommendations is essential for creating a cohesive and effective strategy. Incorporating feedback and insights from previous recommendations enables us to evolve and adapt our approach over time. Following the previous contract conclusion, the following recommendations were tabled for consideration.

- Join up areas of work to be of greater interest to primary schools, and to have a greater impact during activation/delivery.
- Campaigns and resources always work well to help keep The Daily Mile™ engaging and fresh.
- Work towards The Daily Mile™ becoming a key strand/regular activity in the delivery of the HSPs Fit, Fed and Read programme.
- Facilitate in-person discussions with staff in early years settings and direct them to useful physical activity resources, as there cannot be an assumption that all staff know where to access/how to implement activities.
- To have positive relationships with schools, it is important to have staff who are confident in communicating effectively with schools and early years settings from the outset.

* 'Early years settings' refers to all pre-school and day nurseries in Hertfordshire. The main target audience for working with early years settings is any child aged up to five years old.

2. Service requirements continued

Objectives for the 2023–24 contract

Early Years Settings (pre-schools and day nurseries)

- 1.1 To support early years settings to engage in physical activity for under fives.
- 1.2 To promote the early year's physical activity package/Menu of Suggestions to early years settings to provide staff working in early years settings with a sample of activities and games that are suitable for children aged 2–5 years.
- 1.3 To provide opportunities for staff working in early years settings across Hertfordshire to develop their knowledge and understanding around physical activity in under-fives, alongside learning appropriate, age-related physical activity examples to develop and deliver within their own setting.
- 1.4 To provide opportunities for staff working in early years settings to be upskilled in delivering BalanceAbility Sessions within their own early years setting.
- 1.5 To deliver BalanceAbility courses within agreed key areas of deprivation.

1.6 To promote physical activity in under-fives through the 2024 Primary Schools PE Conference and suitable forms of advertising

1.7 Develop an Early Years Advocacy group within Hertfordshire (made up of early years setting managers, physical activity leads, HCC and HSP). To engage with key partnerships to ensure that physical activity guidance in under 5's is current and appropriate and to share knowledge.

Schools - The Daily Mile™

1.8 To support primary, junior, infant, first, middle and all-through schools on The Daily Mile™ database to continue to deliver The Daily Mile™ within their schools as a way to increase physical activity levels and promote a healthy lifestyle from an early age.

1.9 To engage and support new schools which had previously not signed up for the Daily Mile, prioritising schools in areas of deprivation across ten districts/boroughs according to IMD deprivation data (2019).

1.10 To promote The Daily Mile™ initiative through relevant Hertfordshire programmes, webinars, promotional material, social media, and other forms of advertising

Determining and dividing staff resources based on knowledge and skill set was crucial for optimising the opportunity to successfully create and deliver the elements of the programme. To facilitate this, a project officer from the Children and Young People's Team took the lead, supported by a project assistant. Part way through the contract the Project Officer left the organisation, so the project assistant, at this point well versed in the programme, ably took over the lead on the project to its contract end. During the contract, there was the opportunity to draw on knowledge and expertise from the education sector (in the form of our schools' lead and Head Teacher Advocates Group); a leading early years movement specialist; the Herts Disability Sports Foundation; HCC Active and Safer Travel teams and Herts for Learning's team, who provided invaluable data insight of settings at the onset of the contract.

3. Herts Mini Movers

Online resource
Objectives 1.2 & 1.3

Physical development is one of the three prime areas within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Physical activity in the early years should encourage children to practise big movements like jumping, running, and balancing and to build these as they grow.



Funded by
Hertfordshire County Council



There will be a range of physical abilities from those just starting to walk, to those who are nearly ready for school. Therefore, guidance to early years settings on what is deemed an appropriate level of activity to do for 15 minutes each day was key to ensuring meaningful and impactful delivery across the setting.

In the Early Years Pilot project delivered in 22-23, it was identified that EYFS settings wanted support in introducing a range of activities which gave the opportunity to explore new ways to engage the children with physical activity. The Menu of Suggestions created and showcased several opportunities. These could be accessed as online resources and included some basic games and activities that could be easily incorporated into other areas of learning, such as maths and literacy. It was hoped that this would be a resource that the practitioners could continue to use without having to set up a whole session dedicated to 'PE'. Feedback from settings was that there still needed to be further support in this area and, whilst the CPD element of this project will have undoubtedly helped to upskill and encourage practitioners, there has still been a clear need for a resource which can be utilised by all in a similar fashion.

Collaborating closely with Helen Battelley, an early-years specialist in physical development and movement, a comprehensive written resource document was created, and it featured a large selection of activities that were split based on key fundamental movements, each accompanied by an extension and adaptation to ensure it was suitable for children aged 0-5.

The reason for segregating it by stage of development rather than age was because within the Early Learning Goals (ELG), assessments for children do not take place until they reach the end of the reception year at the age of five so, as a result, specific assessment criteria is not in place.

Helen chose not to offer an analysis of the expected developmental level by age in the resource as movement is holistic, therefore by fostering an environment to support physical development, children generally advance at their own rate.

3. Herts Mini Movers continued

Initially, discussions were had around the possibility of distributing both paper copies and an online version of the resource. However, opting for paper copies would entail a significant cost due to the substantial amount of paper required. This approach would also have contradicted HSP's values around environmental sustainability; therefore, the decision was made to only offer the resource in an online format.

Hosting the resource online also allowed us to monitor engagement levels, which would not have been possible with a paper-based version. As well as this, the online platform can be regularly updated, ensuring it remains current and therefore receives sustained engagement from our target audience.

The 5 segments of movements a practitioner can choose from are as follows:



3. Herts Mini Movers continued

Once the written content was finalised, the intention was to enhance the material by incorporating photos and videos to make it more interactive and visually pleasing. Due to our links with the university, Helen was granted the opportunity to deliver a session at the on-site nursery, and we were allowed to record footage to use within the resource. Doing so, not only gave the resource authenticity but guaranteed a professional aesthetic.

The content was originally planned to be uploaded in the early stages of the contract. However, due to a redesign of the HSP website, this process encountered a slight delay. Additionally, the time taken to edit and upload the footage was very time-consuming meaning that the launch date was pushed back to December.

However, this delay allowed us to collaborate more with our marketing team and allowed us to look more in detail at what could be improved. It was agreed that assigning a brand logo would be beneficial and allow us to market and promote the resource effectively.

The writer and video resources can be accessed here:

www.sportinherts.org.uk/early-years

The name "Herts Mini Movers" was a collaborative decision from HSP and Helen. As this resource focused on movement, the aim was to select a brand name that would highlight this which led to Helen suggesting 'Mini Movers'. We then collectively agreed to incorporate 'Herts' at the beginning to establish its association with Hertfordshire. After consulting with our marketing team, who approved the name, the team created the design of four children "dancing" to emphasise movement.

Screenshots of the online resource are shown below and right.

The image displays two screenshots of the online resource. The left screenshot shows a video player interface for 'Herts Mini Movers', featuring a logo with four dancing children and text indicating it is funded by Hertfordshire County Council. The right screenshot shows a 'Resources' page with a navigation menu and a grid of resource cards. The grid includes activities such as 'Educational Setting - Herts Mini Movers', 'Balance, Coordination & Control - Full Resource', 'Equipment & Wheeled Toys', 'Locomotor & Navigating Space - Full Resource', 'Music & Movement - Full Resource', 'Object Control & Catching - Full Resource', 'Coloured Hoop', 'Construction City', 'Floor is Lava', 'Rolling Horse', 'Hot Chocolate', 'Number Friends', 'Obstacle Course', 'Pirate Ship', 'Rainy Weather', 'Rudler Bean Game', 'Spot Warm Up', 'Tape Trotter', 'The High Wire', and 'Walk The Plank'. Below the grid, a list of video thumbnails is visible, including 'Herts Mini Movers - Bonfire and Fireworks', 'Herts Mini Movers - Snowperson and Snow Angels', and 'Herts Mini Movers - Walking Round The Room'.

3. Herts Mini Movers continued

The resource was launched on 4th December 2023. By this time, we had compiled a large database of contacts due to being well into the contract duration. Direct emails containing a link to the Herts Mini Movers resource were dispatched to all contacts. This link was trackable, allowing us to monitor user engagement, which showed over 500 click-throughs from individuals to the resource page.

Initially, there was a proposal to incorporate a login feature to the resource so we could monitor what settings were using it. However, it became evident that this approach would be a barrier. Many of these settings are under extreme pressure with limited time to invest in activities. To captivate our target audience effectively the resource needed to be inviting, easy to navigate, easy to follow and simplified as much as possible. This also means that as there is no login required parents can access it easily.

We were contacted through Helen Battelley by Active Matters, a global organisation committed to early years physical development, activity, health, and well-being. They expressed interest in featuring our resource on their website, mentioning it as *"a superb resource that exemplifies best practices in Early Years provision for all Sports Partnerships."*

A survey was sent out to gather feedback on the resource from early years staff across Hertfordshire. All participants said they would highly recommend Herts Mini Movers to others.

A nursery Manager at a PVI setting stated the resource is:

"Easy to implement, the activities are explained really well and it's great that you can make it easier or harder for the children and they have loved all of the games we have used so far!"

Actions/ recommendations:

- Redesign the brand logo to fit with the new website design.
- Implement continuous promotion using seasonal themes to encourage people to interact with the resource.
- Upload content to HSP's Moving More activity finder platform to enable other users, including parents, to utilise the activities within the home.
- Recognise the ongoing need for content to maintain the resources' relevance and align with the practitioners' needs.
- Explore opportunities to signpost to other relevant resources, to enhance the offering of further key opportunities for EYFS staff.



Herts Mini Movers - The Circus Horn

4. CPD Training (Objective 1.3)

To enhance the skills of 80 early years practitioners through a professional development programme, our primary focus was on delivering high-quality training tailored to meet the specific needs of practitioners in supporting children to be more physically active.

Collaborating closely with Helen Battelley, we engaged in detailed discussions to identify relevant themes for the training sessions, particularly emphasising physical activity. Analysis of data from the National Early Years Survey highlighted a strong interest in activities promoting movement and physical engagement among practitioners. Therefore, we designed five courses that focused on the importance of movement and play. These were three online sessions and two in-person sessions to offer flexibility to participants:

- 26th June – Movement Matters in Early Childhood (Online)
- 29th June – Movement Matters in Early Childhood (In person)
- 13th September – Boosting Physical Development, Birth – 3 Years (Online)
- 25th September – Early Childhood Physical Development (Online)
- 16th October – Movement Matters in Early Childhood (In person)

Marketing strategies involved initially sending personalised handwritten letters to settings located in our Active Local areas, followed by sending direct emails to wider settings. Partnering with key organisations such as Herts for Learning (HFL) enabled the courses to be promoted through their large network and regular weekly newsletters. These avenues proved to be the most effective promotional channels. We used Eventbrite as our main booking system for all the courses delivered throughout this contract. This proved to be a great success as it enabled us to efficiently monitor and track course bookings, as well as gather essential participant information ahead of each session.

Number of settings which attended is shown right:

The online training sessions achieved much higher attendance, this was due to staffing shortages in early years settings, where managers were hesitant to release staff for the longer in-person training. Despite our efforts to centralise the in-person training locations, such as selecting the University of Hertfordshire as the initial venue, attendance was hindered due to staffing shortages and financial constraints faced by staff due to the cost-of-living crisis.

PVI	64	90.14%
Agencies	32	45.07%
Maintained school nurseries	11	15.49%
Sport company	1	1.41%
Childminder	6	8.45%

4. CPD training continued

Following the completion of all five training sessions, an analysis revealed that more private, voluntary, and independent (PVI) settings participated compared to maintained settings. This may have been due to there being no physical education leads in PVI settings, whereas maintained schools can rely on the expertise of specialised staff members across different key stages.

Across the five courses, 114 early-years practitioners in Hertfordshire underwent training on the importance of movement and physical activity within the early years. This training equipped them with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement a variety of games aimed at boosting physical activity levels within their own settings.

Megan, a nursery manager has expressed how the training has positively impacted children within her setting:

"I found taking part in Helen's course extremely beneficial. One aspect of the course that I took back with me and implemented straight away was removing chairs from the everyday activities within the setting and only using these predominantly at mealtimes. This was a super simple way to get the children moving around the tabletop activities, reaching around and searching for items that had been dropped rather than relying on others to retrieve them. This has particularly worked for children who preferred more focussed activities over running around in the garden as they are now constantly on the go but without realising".

Clare, a nursery assistant stated:

"I have learnt to let children take risks when it comes to play, and I will push to management the importance of the different physical play styles".

Actions / Future Recommendations:

- Survey all previous attendees to identify key themes for future CPD courses. This approach would bridge gaps, ensuring courses are relevant by aligning content with the specific needs and requests of early years practitioners.
- Explore other options around training delivery providers to offer individuals the opportunity to learn from a diverse range of experienced professionals.
- Send surveys out post-training to capture feedback and impact.
- Map out suitable venues as this is very time-consuming, getting ahead of this process would be beneficial when it comes to delivery.
- Use Eventbrite as the main booking system as it allows for monitoring and capture of key information and data.
- Provide a range of in-person and online offerings for increased flexibility to accommodate the work schedules of staff.
- Utilise a suitable online platform for webinar sessions/CPD sessions.

5. Balance bike training

Balance bikes are pedal-less bikes designed to help children learn balance and coordination, which are essential skills for riding a traditional bicycle. Balance bikes can support a child's journey in learning to ride:

- **Developing balance and coordination:** Balance bikes allow children to focus solely on learning to balance without the added complexity of pedals. By using their feet to propel and stop the bike, children naturally develop a sense of balance and coordination.
- **Building confidence:** Riding a balance bike gives children a sense of control and independence, which can boost their confidence as they progress. The gradual transition to a pedal bike becomes less daunting as they master balance and steering skills.
- **Early riding skills:** Balance bikes help children develop core riding skills such as steering, braking, and manoeuvring. These foundational skills make the transition to a pedal bike smoother and quicker.



5. Balance bike training continued

Originally, the contract KPI centred around utilising Balanceability. Balanceability is a company that offers a learn-to-cycle program specifically designed for children aged 2½ to 6 years old. The program focuses on teaching children the fundamental skills of balance and control needed to ride a bicycle confidently. It is based on the use of balance bikes, which are pedal-less bikes that allow children to develop their balance and coordination before transitioning to a pedal bike.

Balanceability provides training and support to instructors, schools, and other organisations interested in implementing their program. They offer instructor training courses and supply educational resources, including lesson plans and teaching materials, to facilitate the teaching of balance and cycling skills to young children.

The program aims to make learning to ride a bike fun, engaging, and accessible for children of all abilities. By mastering the skills taught through Balanceability, children can gain the confidence and coordination necessary to progress in riding traditional pedal bikes without the need for stabilisers.

Use of Balanceability, the brand, was explored which included a

comprehensive package consisting of balance bikes, helmets, a course manual, session plans, activity cards, balance equipment boxes, and resources for four virtual training sessions. However, the associated costs, particularly for the training package exceeded our budget. Therefore, we had to explore alternative options, leading to delays in launching the sessions. We wanted to ensure we kept it balance bike-focused, as there is a gap between any form of bike training before Bikeability at age 7.

We attended a Recycle meeting at Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), where we presented our project to engage key stakeholders such as the Hertfordshire Cycling Team, Active Safer Travel team, and local cycling hubs. This opportunity proved a success, and Herts Sport & Physical Activity Partnership were offered to partake in the Bikeability Trust pilot programme.

Through a collaborative effort with Hertfordshire Disability Sport Foundation (HDSF) and HCC, we aimed to conduct 4 pilot courses by the end of September/Early October, each consisting of a 3-hour session offering balance bikes to settings post-training. This incentive attracted significant interest, with the bikes allocated to the settings with the highest free school meal criteria.

For those settings that did not qualify for bikes, we were able to signpost to their local cycle hub.

Acknowledging the challenges faced by our target audience in attending training sessions, HDSF offered to deliver a twilight 1-hour session within schools. Although these sessions were not accredited and did not include balance bikes, they focused on enhancing their skills through engaging in balance bike games.

This involved collaborating closely with the School Games Organisers (SGOs) to locate a suitable school for hosting the training as well as helping to promote it to schools. Leveraging the SGOs' existing relationships with schools was important, due to their familiarity with the local area, it helped to promote effectively to individual schools and the SGOs were able to identify the schools that would benefit the most. Their support enabled us to tailor our approach to accommodate the needs of each local area significantly enhancing the reach of the training and resulting in an increase in bookings that would have otherwise been unachievable without their



5. Balance bike training continued

We were able to effectively address the barriers hindering staff from participating in CPD training. By offering a choice between longer and shorter courses, we effectively responded to feedback related to staff shortages and time restrictions. Overall, the delivery and the combination of longer and shorter courses proved to be successful.

Training dates were set as follows, with an additional session due to run beyond the contract end date but before the end of May 2024.

- 2nd October – St Albans Cycle Hub (3 hours)
- 9th October – Hertford County Hall (3 hours)
- 30th October – Watford Cycle Hub (3 hours)
- 22nd January – Ridgeway Academy (1 hour)
- 16th February – Woodhall School (3 hours)
- 4th March – Longdean School (1 hour)
- 26th March – Baldock Community Centre (3 hours)
- 18th April – Roebuck Academy (1 hour)
- 25th April – Broxbourne CE Primary School (1 hour)
- Borehamwood – TBC at the time of this report

Implementing training sessions within schools enabled us to build strong partnerships with the School Games Organisers and HDSF. The success of this part of the project was made possible through the generous support of Herts Disability Sports Foundation and Herts Active and Safer Travel Team, allowing us to train 55 practitioners so far across the county.



Actions/recommendations:

- Ensure there are tangible benefits for attendees as this approach was well received by staff and resulted in fully booked courses.
- Collaborate with the marketing team to ensure that marketing efforts are engaging and highlight the benefits to enhance audience engagement.
- Remove emphasis on Balanceability – this implies the use of the brand, but it is more about the skills of utilising the balance bikes and how this develops early balance and core stability to support the ability to ride independently.
- Use a joined-up approach working with HDSF and HCC to ensure that all essential industry partners are informed and offered the chance to participate in the programme.

6. The Daily Mile™ (Objectives 1.8, 1.9 & 1.10)

A Youth Sport Trust Survey (2020) reported that 75% of teachers saw noticeably low levels of physical fitness among their pupils when they returned to school following the national COVID-19 lockdowns, and research has shown that The Daily Mile™ initiative can have a positive impact on children's health and well-being, whilst enhancing focus and attentiveness back in the classroom.

The Daily Mile™ aims to improve the physical, mental, emotional, and social health and well-being of children, regardless of age or personal circumstances. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been fewer opportunities for children to be physically active, and The Daily Mile™ provides a simple and free initiative developed to encourage children to step out of the classroom for 15 minutes a day to engage in running or jogging at their own pace.



The Daily Mile™ is simple and free:

- It takes place over just 15 minutes, with children averaging a mile each day (dependent on age and ability).
- Children run outside in the fresh air – and the weather is a benefit, not a barrier.
- There's no set-up, tidy-up, or equipment required.
- Children run in their uniforms so no kit or changing time is needed.
- It's social, non-competitive, and fun.
- It's fully inclusive; every child succeeds, whatever their age or ability.

The Daily Mile™ website is:

www.thedailymile.co.uk

6. The Daily Mile™ continued

Sign-ups:

There was initial confusion regarding the number of sign-ups for the Daily Mile™. When looking at the document, it was discovered that sign-ups from Hertfordshire and Herefordshire had been merged, leading to an increased count. This issue has since been rectified, and a total of 344 schools have signed up for The Daily Mile™ with seven schools signing up since January 2024.

Engagement with The Daily Mile™:

A survey was distributed to schools in Hertfordshire to understand the positive impact of participating in The Daily Mile™ on students and to identify any barriers or challenges with the initiative. The survey link was sent to all School Games Organisers (SGOs) to push out to the schools within their area. A total of 39 schools responded to the survey.

The survey results were largely positive, with schools sharing impactful experiences. HSP created ten case studies from these results. These were presented at the Annual PE Conference, allowing schools to gain insight into the different approaches as well as recognising the positive impact it has had on their school communities.

Shown right: one of several case studies produced showcasing the success of The Daily Mile™ across Hertfordshire



THE DAILY MILE

Little Gaddesden C of E Primary School, Dacorum

Joined in 2018

When

All of our classes run the Daily Mile 3 times a week. Its an integral part of our school routine and the children love it

How

It works best for our children having the Daily Mile scheduled into the timetable.

"The daily Mile has encouraged more children to attend our weekly morning running club. The children have better stamina and fitness levels. We also track their individual distances and this encourages the children to aim for new personal bests".

Where

We have a Daily Mile track that goes around the outside of our playground area. The children run 8 laps of the track which is equal to 1 mile.

Rating



Whole schools value rating of
The Daily Mile

6. The Daily Mile™ continued

Challenges highlighted by schools included:

"We struggle as sometimes the children at times need incentivising."

"Resources for motivating children."

"I need to convince my staff of the benefits."

"Our biggest challenge is time and teachers wanting to do it."

"Idea on games children can play so that they can have a personal goal of each daily mile."

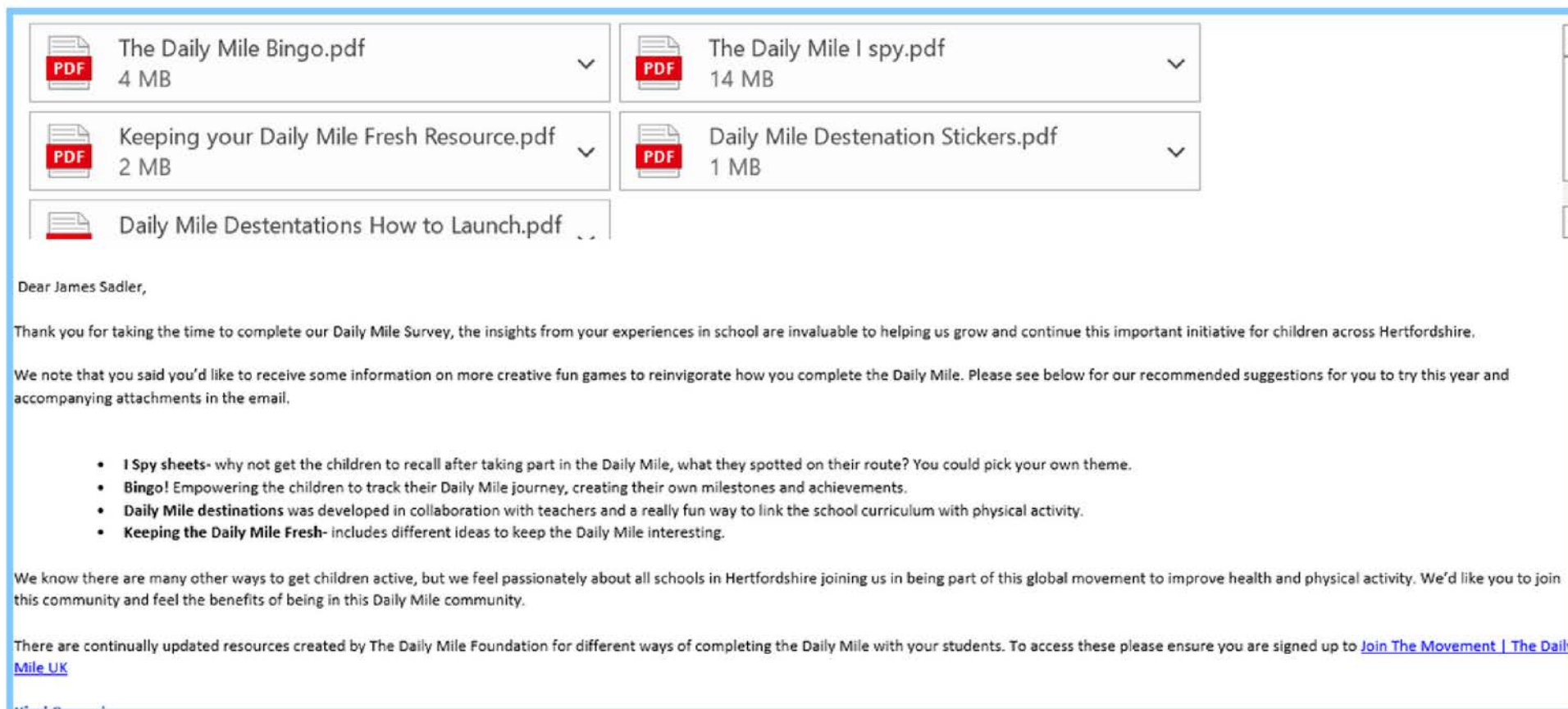
6. The Daily Mile™ continued

Based on feedback, three schools were chosen to receive a comprehensive written email package aimed at supporting teachers to help them introduce a fresh and stimulating challenge to boost motivation and engagement. It includes essential evidence and statistics highlighting the benefits of this initiative.

The resources included were:

- Bingo table sheet.
- I spy sheet.
- The Daily Mile™- 'keeping it fresh' document.
- Destinations sheet with stickers.

A tailored email (shown below) provided an opportunity to conduct follow-ups with the selected schools during the summer term. The objective was to evaluate and understand if any methods have had an impact and to identify potential opportunities to develop this further



The screenshot shows an email interface with the following attachments:

- The Daily Mile Bingo.pdf (4 MB)
- The Daily Mile I spy.pdf (14 MB)
- Keeping your Daily Mile Fresh Resource.pdf (2 MB)
- Daily Mile Destenation Stickers.pdf (1 MB)
- Daily Mile Destentations How to Launch.pdf

The email body text is as follows:

Dear James Sadler,

Thank you for taking the time to complete our Daily Mile Survey, the insights from your experiences in school are invaluable to helping us grow and continue this important initiative for children across Hertfordshire.

We note that you said you'd like to receive some information on more creative fun games to reinvigorate how you complete the Daily Mile. Please see below for our recommended suggestions for you to try this year and accompanying attachments in the email.

- **I Spy sheets**- why not get the children to recall after taking part in the Daily Mile, what they spotted on their route? You could pick your own theme.
- **Bingo!** Empowering the children to track their Daily Mile journey, creating their own milestones and achievements.
- **Daily Mile destinations** was developed in collaboration with teachers and a really fun way to link the school curriculum with physical activity.
- **Keeping the Daily Mile Fresh**- includes different ideas to keep the Daily Mile interesting.

We know there are many other ways to get children active, but we feel passionately about all schools in Hertfordshire joining us in being part of this global movement to improve health and physical activity. We'd like you to join this community and feel the benefits of being in this Daily Mile community.

There are continually updated resources created by The Daily Mile Foundation for different ways of completing the Daily Mile with your students. To access these please ensure you are signed up to [Join The Movement | The Daily Mile UK](#)

6. The Daily Mile™ continued

Ongoing advocacy for The Daily Mile™:

Early in 2024, the University of Hertfordshire hosted its annual PE Conference, drawing a large number of educators – 223 delegates from 161 schools – from across the county. Alongside the delivery of 2 tailored CPD sessions and an opportunity to showcase The Daily Mile™ as part of the keynote speech, a stall in the marketplace was given to showcase all the ongoing work around Early Years and the Daily Mile.

Several printed flyers were distributed to promote the Herts Mini Movers resource and the Advocacy Group, as well as a sign-up sheet for our upcoming balance bike training session, which got considerable interest. Ten The Daily Mile™ case studies were presented through a display board, and we also showed a video featuring a PE teacher from Roebuck Academy in Stevenage discussing the impact of The Daily Mile™ on his school. This visual representation allowed teachers to witness how their colleagues in Hertfordshire successfully integrated this initiative, seeing its positive influence not only on students but also on the entire school community.

As well as this, many teachers were unaware that you have to register with The Daily Mile™ Foundation, so teachers were contacted directly afterwards providing them with the necessary information to access a welcome pack for their school.

Overall, this experience was very positive. It allowed us the opportunity to showcase our offerings, broaden our network, engage directly with educators, gain valuable insight, and gather a significant number of email addresses for our database.



6. The Daily Mile™ continued

HSP joined The Daily Mile™ Foundation to celebrate Boxmoor Primary School's first anniversary of participating in The Daily Mile. The purpose of this visit was to provide the new global director of The Daily Mile™ Foundation, Gordon Banks, with an opportunity to witness the programme in action and gain an understanding of the challenges and successes associated with the initiative.

The visit took place during Place2Be's Children's Mental Health Week and provided all involved with the opportunity to celebrate the campaign theme of "My Voice Matters". It is important to encourage children and young people to feel confident so that they can express themselves, and participating in The Daily Mile™ regularly helps boost the physical, mental, emotional, and social health and well-being of children, regardless of age or personal circumstance.



Vicky Campos, Headteacher at Boxmoor Primary School said:

"The Daily Mile has been one of the best things that we have introduced in our school. We love the fact that it is inclusive, everyone takes part, even the staff! It does not matter whether you are the fastest runner or whether you prefer to fast walk, The Daily Mile is for everyone. We have seen huge benefits on our children, both physically and mentally. Some of our children now take part in weekend parkruns with their families and cross-country events thanks to The Daily Mile. It is the perfect way of preparing our children for learning. Boxmoor loves The Daily Mile."

6. The Daily Mile™ continued

The celebration event was supported by Steve Frew, a Youth Sport Trust Athlete Mentor, who delivered an inspiring presentation about his sporting journey.

Steve shared the numerous setbacks he faced before attaining success and winning a Gold Medal in Gymnastics at the Commonwealth Games in 2002 and urged the young people to have self-belief and a positive mindset to achieve any goal they wanted. Year 6 Sports Leaders were given the opportunity to ask Steve some questions and find out more about his career, learning about his dedication to gymnastics from an early age and the role models that encouraged him to pursue his dream. Steve could not resist ending his assembly without demonstrating a few gymnastic moves, which was a fantastic way to increase the excitement, ahead of joining the pupils with their The Daily Mile™ activity in the playground.

Pupils were keen to tell us how they felt about participating in The Daily Mile™:

"It's very fun. It is nice to have a short break from learning to get some fresh air. It also helps me to concentrate more as I have released some energy through The Daily Mile." **Alex**

"I think it is good because it gives children fresh air and when they come back to learning they have a clearer mind. It might not seem a far distance but over time it adds up to a lot. After a few weeks, you will seem much fitter!" **Leo**

"It's really fun. If you are getting restless in class, The Daily helps you move around and you get a break from writing." **Elsie**

"It's fun! It also helps you concentrate in lessons and get all your energy out which means we fidget less!" **Millie**

6. The Daily Mile™ continued

A successful element of this experience was The Daily Mile™ Foundation (TDMF) supplying The Daily Mile™ t-shirts for all students to wear during the visit. This not only enhanced the visual appeal of the camera footage but put a smile on the kids' faces. The school dog, Noodles, even managed to get in on the action!

This visit has allowed HSP to establish a strong rapport with TDMF and Boxmoor Primary School, aligning with the goals and objectives in The Daily Mile™ early years contract. Both organisations will continue to support Boxmoor Primary School with their The Daily Mile™ activities.

The Herts School Games Celebration Event was another key opportunity to highlight and promote The Daily Mile™ and its benefits. In line with a change of emphasis of the School Games programme, the event aimed to include a variety of Inspire carousels of activities. These were aimed at those schools and individuals who for various reasons would not regularly be their district representatives at a county final or represent their school at a sporting event. By its nature, this targeted some of Hertfordshire's most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people from communities facing the greatest inequalities. Between 800-1000 children were set to take part in the event across the day.

The aim was that participation and inclusion in the event would inspire those young people and their schools to embrace opportunities for more regular involvement in sport and physical activity and to view that involvement as a powerful vehicle for whole-school improvement and the raising of life chances for those involved.

Regretfully, the Herts School Games Celebration Event in 2023 was cancelled due to teacher strikes, and there was no other suitable date which could be found to offer an event of an equivalent standard therefore were unable to showcase The Daily Mile™ initiative at the event. The event is scheduled to return in 2024 and plans are in place for the event to proceed this coming year.



Actions/Recommendations:

- Utilise continuous promotion.
- Deliver The Daily Mile™ at the School Games Celebration Event Day 2024.
- Promote TDMF-themed initiatives to schools as this helps to ensure schools are updated and can engage with challenges and competitions.
- Ensure there is an opportunity to promote at the Annual PE Conference.
- Giving a detailed proposal document to the school ahead of any school visits with TDMF. Doing this sufficiently ahead of time outlining who would be attending on the day, photo consent, and the visit agenda was very worthwhile. Additionally, having a Plan B for running The Daily Mile™ in case of bad weather helped ensure the visit ran smoothly.
- For future events, it is advisable to prepare proposal documents for the athlete to ensure they are prepared before the event.
- Allocating enough time to secure an athlete is important, as this process can be time-consuming, as you might not always deal with the athlete directly.

7. Advocacy group

To underpin all the work towards this contract and beyond, HSP was keen to gather key partners and advocates to support initiatives promoting physical activity among 0–5 year-olds in Hertfordshire.

The aspiration for the group was to focus on the development and implementation of an early-years action plan that drives forward this area of work and supports the delivery of increased access to physical activity across Hertfordshire.

The purpose of this advocacy group was to ensure that physical activity remained a key focus for practitioners across the county. Partway through the contract we were able to bring the vision for the group to life.

The initial planning phase involved identifying key organisations that were essential and capable of shaping the group and driving change. This included representatives from Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and Herts for Learning (HFL).

It was important that there was a presence of early years staff on the group to not only share best practices but to identify and share any barriers they have encountered around physical activity so that these can be addressed by the group.

Following the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training sessions delivered by Helen, we identified individuals who showed a strong enthusiasm for physical development and actively participated in the training.

Helen was selected as the chair of the group. Given Helen's consistent involvement in our work and her expertise in the industry, it made her the ideal candidate to lead the group. Following this selection process, all the selected individuals received a personal invitation via direct email to join the Hertfordshire Early Years Physical Activity Advocacy Group (HEYPAAG). Before the first meeting, it was essential to establish a clear set of terms of reference to outline the group's roles and expectations.

This framework was introduced and discussed during the initial meeting. Following on from this it was essential to gain some feedback from each member around what key areas they would like to see the group focus on over the year.

7. Advocacy group continued

The main outcomes for the group include:

- To develop and agree on a multi-partnership early years physical activity action plan.
- To advocate for the importance of physical activity within early years settings, schools and other services that work with under fives.
- To support physical activity campaigns.
- To evaluate and discuss new concepts and initiatives related to physical activity.
- To exchange best practices and share knowledge of effective delivery of under-fives' physical activity.
- To promote physical activity options for under-fives.
- To promote appropriate physical activity training.
- To support and promote antenatal physical activity.
- Identify opportunities for changes.
- Ensure local epidemiology data and other intelligence such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA's) are considered in the planning and delivery of physical activity improvement projects.
- To support the current SEND provision and identify opportunities for children with SEND and their families.
- Raise issues of concerns and barriers to improving early years physical activity.

Timing of future meetings:

It was agreed that these would take place quarterly in the following months:

- March
- June
- September
- December

After discussions in the first meeting, the group identified the key focus areas as:

- Two-year-olds.
- SEND provision.
- Antenatal care.

This presents a significant opportunity to continue the work and influence the Early Years and Childcare Strategic Group, as well as the Antenatal Education Partnership Group. It holds the potential to shape forthcoming opportunities for early years professionals throughout the county.

Actions/Recommendations:

- Continue the meetings.
- Recruit further advocates to join the group including individuals from a school-based EYFS setting so that there is a range of staff from both school and PVI settings.
- Keep the meetings centred on the 3 key focus areas ensuring they remain the focal point of the group.
- Explore further opportunities to link with the Early Years and Childcare Strategic Group and the Antenatal Education Partnership Group.



7. Summary & future recommendations

In conclusion, the Herts Sport & Physical Activity Partnership are delighted with the outcomes of the results achieved under this contract. We have not only met but exceeded the KPI for the continuous professional development offer by attracting 114 practitioners from across the county, surpassing the initial target of 80 attendees.

Our successes include the upskilling of 60 practitioners in Balance Bike training, creating, and developing the Herts Mini Movers resource, and establishing an Advocacy Group to ensure the continuation of this work.

The extension of this work means we can continue to influence the Early Years & Childcare Strategic Group and the Antenatal Education Partnership Group. This ongoing effort will provide early years staff with opportunities for personal and professional growth, ultimately benefiting the children and young people of Hertfordshire to lead a healthy lifestyle and maintain a healthy weight from their earliest years.

Throughout the contract, it has been clear that the key to success in this area of work centres on collaboration and connectivity between organisations and programmes which encompass early years through family-based interventions, as well as those within fixed or educational settings. Conversations with lead officers supporting family interventions and children's services suggested a further link could be created to encompass the promotion of mothers' pre- and post-natal physical activity levels and how this could be better endorsed and promoted in the community through family centres.

Taking this, the learnings and recommendations into account, a new contract was negotiated between Hertfordshire County Council and the Herts Sport & Physical Activity Partnership, building on the legacy of this work for the period April 2024-March 2025.

Details of the 2024/25 contract are outlined on the following page.

7. Summary & future recommendations continued

The 2024/25 contract includes the the following:

Early years settings (pre-schools, nurseries, childminders and family centres)

- To support early years settings to engage in physical activity for under-fives.
- To provide opportunities for staff working in early years settings, including family centres, across Hertfordshire to develop their knowledge and understanding around physical activity in under-fives, alongside learning appropriate, age-related physical activity examples to develop and deliver within their own setting.
- To promote physical activity in under-fives through the 2025 Primary Schools PE Conference and suitable forms of advertising
- To engage with key partnerships to ensure that physical activity guidance in under-fives is current and appropriate and to share knowledge.

Promotion of The Daily Mile™ in schools:

- To support primary, junior, infant, first, middle and all-through schools on The Daily Mile™ database to continue to deliver The Daily Mile™ within their schools as a way to increase physical activity levels and promote a healthy lifestyle from an early age.
- To engage and support new schools which had previously not signed up for The Daily Mile™, prioritising schools in areas of deprivation across ten districts/boroughs according to IMD deprivation data (2019).
- To promote The Daily Mile™ initiative through relevant Hertfordshire programmes, webinars, promotional material, social media, and other forms of advertising

Antenatal Physical Activity Offer:

- To support pregnant people in Hertfordshire to have access to antenatal physical activity during pregnancy.

- To scope and then promote antenatal physical activity opportunities in Hertfordshire, utilising appropriate platforms such as www.movingmore.co.uk
- To support physical activity providers/family centre staff involved in providing physical activity in Hertfordshire, to engage with antenatal physical activity, creating opportunities for conversations about appropriate messaging, and finding easy methods to share relevant antenatal physical activity information and communications.
- To engage and promote antenatal physical activity options to specialist services such as midwives, GPs, obstetricians, physiotherapists, adult and child weight management services, family support services, health visitors etc.
- Provide training opportunities for family centre staff across Hertfordshire to develop their knowledge and understanding around antenatal physical activity, alongside learning appropriate, physical activity examples to develop and deliver within their own setting.

With thanks to everyone who made this 2023/24 Early Years Physical Activity Programme possible

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Date of report: April 2024

