



# **YOUTH ACTIVIST ACADEMY EVALUATION REPORT**

***Mobilising young people as youth leaders  
in Scottish sport & activity***

**#DiverseSport**



**LEAP**  
sports

***“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”***

***Margaret Mead***

## **CONTENTS**

**BACKGROUND P.3**

**ACCREDITATION P.4**

**EVALUATION METHOD P.4**

**THE STEPS P.5**

**DEMOGRAPHICS P.9**

**PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK P.10**

**CONCLUSIONS P.14**

## BACKGROUND

The Year of Young People National Lottery Fund was established to award funding to heritage, sports and community activity projects that support young people to improve their health and wellbeing. It built upon the legacy of the Year of Young People in Scotland in 2018 which aimed to inspire Scotland through our young people: celebrating their achievements; valuing their contribution to communities; and creating new opportunities for young people to shine locally, nationally and globally.

Young people from the LEAP Sports Youth in Sport Task Force co-designed the Youth Activist Academy project. The purpose was to train a group of LGBTIQ+ young people to become Youth Leaders within Scottish sport and physical activity, and to design and deliver activities to other LGBTIQ+ young people supporting them to be more included in sport and therefore lead healthier more active lives.

The project was created out of a need to mobilise the already established young people within LEAP Sports Scotland's network, each of whom regularly volunteered, came to events and made up our Youth in Sport Task Force. The project was built with the key principles of co-production, capacity building, sustainability and health improvement at its heart. With this in mind, it was important that Youth Mentors and Leaders also received accreditation for their work.

The Activist Academy began in October 2018. Participants were trained in the Academy by more experienced trained Youth Mentors, and by industry leaders from within sport and activist organisations. The Academy featured a blend of learning with challenges, activities, inspiring talks, and structured processes for developing and delivering community sports based activities.

The project aimed to take participants through a structured, capacity building and learning experience with an emphasis on individual development. It would achieve this through the use of team work and practical skill acquisition in the process of learning.



## ACCREDITATION

In the co-design process for the Youth Activist Academy project, accreditation was a strong theme. It was acknowledged that there was no current credit or accreditation route for young people who are involved in LEAP Sports' work. This is concerning where young people are consistently doing great work for LGBTIQ+ people in sport but rarely have anything tangible to show for it. The importance of focusing this project on learning as well as activism is precisely how the name of the project came about with 'Academy' conferring a much clearer importance to the young people's learning journeys. Indeed throughout the project, the name and the graduation added a level of significance that encouraged many young people to engage.

We had originally intended to use the Youth Achievement Awards route but in the early stages of developing the project, we considered a number of different routes and discussed options with a number of providers.

We supported young people to consider the pros and cons of different routes in order to make a decision about which Award to proceed with.

The decision was that we would develop a partnership with Glasgow Kelvin College who then supported us to take the young people through their Community Achievement Award. The Award sits at SCQF level 5 and 6 and is designed to support, recognise and accredit learning and achievement in a community setting. This added further important milestones to the young people's journey through the project as they had to matriculate as students and be inducted on to the Award.

## EVALUATION METHOD

All project participants were asked to provide feedback at each stage of the project to measure the participant journey and to get a sense of the overall distance travelled. This was done in different ways including through group conversation and by individuals writing comments under headings describing the different stages and elements of the project. Evaluation videos were taken at each stage and comments taken from these, as well as pictures of the participants taken reflecting on their journey. For the final evaluation, the group was split into two groups; the Youth Mentors and then the rest of the participants. Both groups were asked a number of questions about their experiences, the impact on them, what they have learned and what could have improved the project.

Participants of the project also completed their Community Achievement Award which acted as a record of their personal journeys as well as the achievements and challenges that they faced whilst working on their projects.

Further evaluation evidence came from session records kept by the team (the Project Lead and volunteers) and evidence gathered from our organisation team meetings demonstrating increased engagement of young people in organisation-wide activity.

# THE STEPS

## 1. THE INITIAL CONSULTATION

At the beginning of the project, we held a consultation with a group of young people who had already been involved in activism through our Youth in Sport Task Force; these young people would later become our Youth Mentors, helping significantly with the running of the projects. Young people have been integral to the design and delivery of the Youth Activist Academy and this first stage is an example of consultative method we took throughout the project. The Youth Mentors worked alongside the project team to help design the project in a way that best fit the lives of young people.

Through these initial consultations, we were able to engage young people from the start, make many decisions about the project and get a better perspective on what would work best in terms of working with the groups. We were also able to plan logistics through the lens of the young people taking into account things like planning around term time, and the optimum length of a residential to engage participants. We were also able to present our ideas and gain invaluable feedback on the content of the training.

An unplanned outcome was that we were able to involve and help skill up a new member of staff who had joined LEAP Sports on a one year Community Job Scotland placement. This was a young person who was a similar age to many of the Youth Mentors.

## 2. YOUTH MENTOR RESIDENTIAL

At the next stage we held a residential training for the Youth Mentors to work on activism and issues in LGBTI sport, as well as develop plans for different community projects that Youth Mentors would lead as part of the project. Youth Mentors were central in the design of the project as they helped to design the community projects based on the need and experience of young people. The Youth Mentors spent the weekend developing their skills and learning some new ones in order to become better leaders and enable them to deliver aspects of the project. The Youth Mentors used information learned at the residential to become key driving forces of the project meaning they were essential to the design and delivery of the next stages.

At the end of that residential, we were joined by some of the LEAP Sports staff team who helped the Youth Mentors to fine tune their community project plans. This involved things such as advising on some methodologies, pointing out where particular evidence already existed, and even developing some of the contacts that the young people might need.

Alongside the residential we began to recruit young people as participants in the Youth Activist Academy by creating an online application process and having follow up meetings with each applicant before finalising the group.

### 3. YOUTH ACTIVIST ACADEMY MAIN RESIDENTIAL

The main Academy was a residential held with all participants, including the Youth Mentors. We delivered a non-formal learning programme which included different interactive and engaging workshops by some well known activists. The TIE Campaign<sup>1</sup> ran an activism skills workshop; Football v Homophobia<sup>2</sup> presented many successes and lessons learned from their campaign over the years; LEAP Sports ran workshops on LGBTI sports and then sessions on project management and skills development. Mentors each got to pitch their community projects and the participants had autonomy as they then chose the projects they wanted to work on. There were eight projects in total, covering a broad range of angles on LGBTI sports. Giving young people space to choose projects gave them the ability to assess their current skills as well as consider what they would like to learn and develop from working on community projects.

The residential was an opportunity for young people from many different areas of Scotland to come together with shared goals and purpose. A non-formal approach was best as it afforded good opportunities for individual personal development as well as team-building and learning. Isolation and inactivity for LGBTI young people are significant barriers to good physical and mental health and well-being. We used Education Through Sport methods in both residentials to include aspects of sport and physical activity with meaningful messages. Young people were also encouraged to use the sports facilities to play football, table tennis and more together.



1/ <https://www.tiecampaign.co.uk/>

2/ <https://www.footballvhomophobia.com/>



## 4. THE COMMUNITY PROJECTS

The community projects had been decided based on a combination of the Youth Mentors knowledge through activism, through research they undertook, and then some fine-tuning discussions with the LEAP Sports staff team. Some obstacles were encountered in the implementation of the community projects. The initial project designs accurately reflected the needs of the LGBTIQ+ community but during the first month, many participants were getting little to no response from key sports groups and individuals they contacted in the process of implementing their projects, which meant that some of those projects needed to be altered. The participants all adapted to this challenge really well, and remoulded their projects as necessary to fit the obstacles that they encountered.

The participants freedom to design projects themselves, ability to work autonomously and readiness to adapt their ideas where necessary meant that the projects were all produced to a high quality, despite some of them being different to original plans.

The projects were as follows:

1. A guide for the trans community to be able to access gyms and ask the right questions to find out if they are accessible to their requirements; with an accompanying guide for sports centres any gym facilities in presenting accessibility options for the trans community;
2. A media campaign that consisted of a series of interviews examining the experiences of different generations of LGBTIQ+ people and their relationships with sport;
3. A toolkit for football coaches who want to learn more about the LGBTIQ+ community and make their clubs more inclusive. This project was created in partnership with Football v Homophobia and the Football v Homophobia Youth Panel;

5. An LGBTIQ+ 101 resource for anyone in the sports sector who wants to learn more about optimising LGBTIQ+ inclusivity in their clubs or sports spaces;
6. An accreditation scheme for the Football v Homophobia campaign - young people created a self-assessment tool for junior football clubs. Club leaders or coaches are asked a series of questions and receive targeted guidance;
7. An analysis of many different sports trans policies across Scotland, aiming to provide the trans community in Scotland with a greater understanding of which sports have eligibility and/or inclusion policies for trans people and to what degree;
8. A social media campaign around BAME LGBTIQ+ Experiences in Sport, highlighting the experiences of different intersectional identities. This project culminated in an event with a panel discussion from four BAME LGBTIQ+ people, a zine-making workshop and a healing circle.



## 5. GRADUATION

After four months of working on their community projects, the participants all graduated from the Youth Activist Academy and each received a Community Achievement Award on the 2nd November 2019. Parents and friends of the participants were invited to join in the festivities, but prior to that the participants also worked on some evaluation (detailed above) as well as finalising their presentations for the ceremony. During the ceremony, each group presented their finalised projects and some participants made inspirational speeches, before the participants were finally presented with their graduation certificates.

The graduation saw participants able to evaluate their own work and assess how far they have come by doing the Youth Activist Academy. The graduation was another example of young people being key in the delivering and evaluating of the project. The participants completed self evaluation, i.e. what they have learned and what obstacles they have overcome, as well as evaluation of the project, how it was organised and delivered and whether it achieved what it set out to do.





# DEMOGRAPHICS

## Disability

37% of participants identified as having a disability. Disability was not one of the protected characteristics that we initially intended to focus on, it does mean that we worked intersectionally throughout this project and that we were able to work with a variety of LGBTIQ+ young people.

## Ethnicity & Race

Out of the 24 participants, 2 were Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME). Intersectional identities are something that this project could have done better, however, one of the community projects focused on BAME LGBTIQ+ experiences in sport which has opened us to a different intersection of the LGBTIQ+ community as we have seen a larger number of BAME people engage in our network of sports groups and we have had more interest from BAME volunteers.

## Gender

The project was unevenly split between men (inc. trans men) and women (inc. trans women) with no non-binary people. Men outnumbered women on the project by 8, meaning there were 16 men and 8 women in total.

## Gender Identity

Over 40% of participants identified as Transgender. 2 out of the 7 community projects primarily concerned trans issues in sport, led by trans young people with lived experience relevant to the project goals.

## Geography

The young people we work with typically come from Edinburgh and Glasgow, and so the challenge that we faced was engaging people from further afield. The majority of participants on the project did come from Glasgow and Edinburgh however, the second-largest amount of participants came from Angus - closely followed by Dumfries and Galloway, Dundee, Falkirk, Renfrewshire and Stirling.

## Sexuality

In terms of sexuality, the largest group of participants identified as bisexual, with Lesbian and Gay young people tied at a close second. Some participants identified as heterosexual/straight, however, all of those participants also identified as Trans - meaning that we worked primarily with LGBTIQ+ young people throughout this project.



# PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Participants signed up for a number of reasons; some wanted to develop their skills working on their own activism projects, others wanted to network, make new friends or make a difference in the lives of LGBTI people involved in sport. At the second residential, we asked the participants to write on a white-board the reason they signed up and what they wanted to get from the project. Their responses were:

"Build relationships with young activists"



"New skills and create change in the world"



"A better understanding of LGBTI issues and awareness to help"

"A better understanding of working with communities"

"Make a difference for LGBTQI+ people in sport"





After each section of the project participants were asked for their views.

## June Residential

"A great venue, positive atmosphere and great knowledge provided"

"Friendly staff, good accommodation and excellent workshops"



"Great workshops and a great opportunity to meet like minded people"

"Workshops were a bit repetitive but great information given anyway"

## Community Projects

"Continuing to think creatively about project ideas/opportunity to help LGBTIQ+ people"



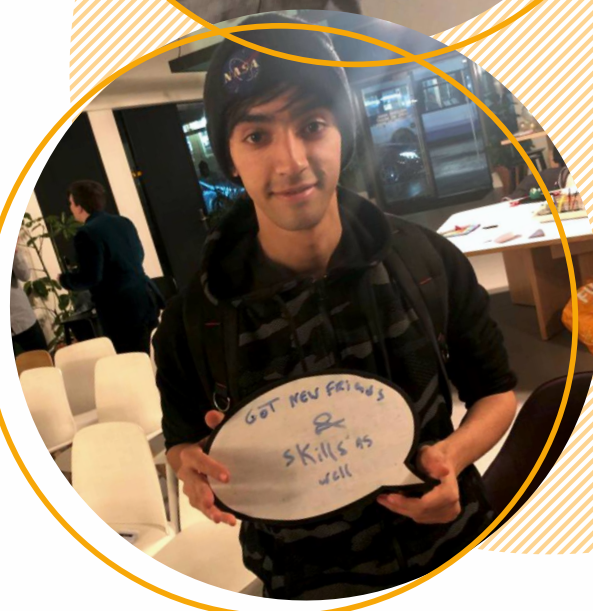
"I enjoyed working on the project but I wish I had given myself more time for it. It was exciting to see challenges that came up and find a way around them"

"Good work, challenging at times but extremely rewarding input from mentors"



Due to common experiences of bullying and exclusion, LGBTIQ+ young people are often much more prone to isolation and loneliness. These are both key factors in poor mental and physical health, and so one of the driving factors of this project was for us to support and empower young people in working to try and tackle some of these challenges on their own terms, while also developing their own social connections through participation in the project. It was therefore refreshing and encouraging for us to see that many of the comments we received from participants about what they each took from this project after its completion were that they were able to develop strong networks and friendships through their involvement in it.

Each community project has worked to encourage LGBTIQ+ young people from diverse communities across Scotland to become more active in sport, while the young people who participated themselves stated that working on these projects has inspired them to stay involved with the community in regards to social activities as well as activism, and with sport in general.



All of the work we have done through this project has been consultation-based and led by young people themselves, who each determined from the offset what they want to get out of the project. In the initial consultation young people said they wanted to:

"Acquire new skills, Improve self confidence, gain greater experience working in a team and get more experience of behaviour enhancing processes, such as competition and collaboration"



The participants said at the end of the project:

"I learnt about Communication,  
Teamwork and Balancing workloads"

"Independent advocacy - making a  
difference on my own!"

"I gained confidence,  
communication skills and  
team work"

"I feel like I have made a difference"

"Project development and  
management and confidence in  
my ability"

"I really enjoyed the project. It was  
great to get the sports community  
involved and was great as it was  
highlighting issues the clubs/teams  
may not have previously thought of"



"This has helped me to have a better  
understanding of people and how  
important it is to work with  
communities"



# CONCLUSIONS

The Youth Activist Academy was a great opportunity for us to engage some young people who were already known to us as well as reach new young people. The following outcomes were realised through the project:

- Young people have become involved or become more involved with the aims of LEAP Sports Scotland
- Young people have learned skills to enable their activism, and have become engaged in activism work
- Young people have created pieces of work that will have a lasting impact and will make a real difference to the landscape of LGBTI sport in Scotland
- Young people have been awarded with an SCF qualification
- Mentors have developed their leadership and peer working skills
- Young people are better equipped to promote sport and physical activity amongst their LGBTIQ+ peers
- Participants are better networked and connected, and many have reduced isolation

The Youth Activist Academy has built a community of more effective, empowered and connected LGBTIQ+ young people within Scottish sport who are better equipped to deliver self-led activities to peers. Young people have been integral to the design, delivery and evaluation of this entire project. This began at the initial design of this project but their input did not end there, young people were consulted and were critical at every stage of development and worked with the youth worker to plan the residentials and the community projects. Young people also worked as youth mentors and supported each other with the design and delivery of the community projects, working effectively as a team and as leaders.

Young people performed their own evaluation with support from the youth worker, they spent time in their groups taking part in evaluation exercises and then came together as the larger project group to share and reflect. On top of this we employed a young person through the Community Jobs Scotland scheme, who supported the youth worker with admin based tasks, logistics around residentials and helped to develop workshops.

Poor LGBTIQ+ participation in sport is intrinsically linked to poor mental health. The Youth Activist Academy worked in a way that encouraged sustainable change by ensuring that an understanding of this was built into the project. Having young people get together in an environment with likeminded people and feel connected cannot be underestimated as an important part of this approach. This approach along with the community projects themselves which worked to encourage young people to become more active in sport and physical activity and to improve participation in sport, has had a direct positive impact on young people's mental health. We hope this continues through to have medium and longer term impacts of improved physical health too. There are already many good examples of where young people have gone on to take part in physical activity and sport and to encourage their friends and peers to do so as well.

Young people received two awards, one from us and one from an external body, Glasgow Kelvin College. This contributed to an increased sense of achievement and gave them something that they could use for future job or education based applications. There is already some evidence of this as we have gone on since to provide references for young people.



# THANK YOU

Thank you to players of the National Lottery. By playing the National Lottery you've helped to make this project possible, and to ensure that we can continue to progress equality and inclusion work in sport.

Thank you to each of our funders. Our main funder, the Heritage Lottery Fund via the Year of Young People National Lottery Fund. Also to the National Lottery Young Start fund and Lankelly Chase whose funded projects supported this one to take place.

Thank you to Pride Sports, The TIE Campaign and Football v Homophobia for their contribution by providing training for the participants of this project.

Thank you to Glasgow Kelvin College for supporting the participants through their Community Achievement Awards and helping us to support them as well.

Thank you to SPACES in Glasgow for hosting our Graduation.

Thank you to all the LEAP Sports Scotland volunteers who helped with this project from printing and laminating, to supporting at residentials and running the graduation.

Finally, thank you to the young people who did not take part in this project but were able to be part of the committee that helped design and guide this project.

Thank you to Jim Muotune and BBC Scotland Sport for supporting one of our community projects.

**leapsports.org**  
**#DiverseSport**

**LEAP**  
sports

#DiverseSport

**LEAP**  
sports

