

Girls' football: understanding reasons for participation and drop-out

Submission date 15/05/2024	Recruitment status No longer recruiting	☒ Prospectively registered ☐ Protocol
Registration date 25/06/2024	Overall study status Ongoing	☐ Statistical analysis plan ☐ Results
Last Edited 24/06/2024	Condition category Other	☐ Individual participant data ☐ Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

This pilot study aims to better understand the reasons behind girls' participation in, and drop-out from, football. Adolescence is typically the time that young people, but particularly girls, drop out from sport. Football is now the most-played sport for girls and women in the UK, and the Northumberland Football Association (FA) alone has 4975 females registered, of whom 2955 are aged 10-16 years. The success of the England women's football team, along with the 'Raising the bar' independent report for the Department for Media, Culture & Sport has brought in interest, funding and new players. This represents a real opportunity for creating an environment that encourages participation in sport throughout life. Participation in sport provides benefits to physical, mental and social health, and young people who take part in sport have better physical fitness. Physical fitness is strongly associated with both current and future health, so keeping young people involved in sport or exercise is important to creating a lifelong habit.

Who can participate?

Players aged 10-16 years old who are registered with a girls' club in the Northumberland FA , and their parent/carer

What does the study involve?

At the start of the new football season (August 2024), the study aims to recruit participants and track them every four months with a questionnaire on their sport participation. This focuses on football, but also covers other sports and clubs. At the beginning of the next season (August 2025) the study will look at who has re-registered and who has not. The girls who have not registered with a team will be approached to find out more about their reasons for not registering (initially by questionnaire, but also with the option to speak to the study team to give more context and detail). The study is planned to continue for at least two seasons, with the final data collection at the beginning of the third season. The feedback will be summarised and shared with the Northumberland FA to help them tailor their offering, and also with schools as the girls will be asked about school sport participation.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

The benefits of this project are an environment where more girls feel able to take part, have an

enjoyable experience that considers their needs, and helps create a positive habit for life. The results should help build a large follow-up study, and will also provide a basis for other sports. Potential risks include the participants sharing distressing reasons for dropping out.

Where is the study run from?

The study is being run from Newcastle University's Population Health Sciences Institute and Human Nutrition and Exercise Research Centre.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

November 2023 to December 2028

Who is funding the study?

Newcastle University

Who is the main contact?

Dr Laura Basterfield, laura.basterfield@ncl.ac.uk

Contact information

Type(s)

Public, Scientific, Principal investigator

Contact name

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Additional identifiers

Study information

Scientific Title

Participation in girls' football: longitudinal feasibility study understanding reasons for participation and drop-out in 10-16-year-olds

Study objectives

Football is the most popular sport for girls and women in the UK, and participation in sport through life has many benefits to physical, social, and mental health. However, adolescence remains the time when many girls stop playing sport. Given the positive impacts that sport can have, it is vital to understand the reasons that girls start playing football, and why they continue or may subsequently stop playing (drop-out). This feasibility project is a collaboration with the

Northumberland Football Association, and aims to recruit girls aged 10-16 years (and their parent/carer) who are currently registered with a football team. Regular questionnaires will be sent asking about their football participation throughout the year. At the start of the next season, the study will record who is still taking part, and who has dropped out. The study team will then follow-up with the participants to find out why they have kept playing, or why they have stopped. This will continue into the third playing season.

The study aims to gain some insights that will help the clubs/coaches/FAs to deliver a programme that keeps the girls involved. The study team also aim to speak to coaches /managers and parents where possible, to gain a fuller view of the situation. The results should be transferable to other sports, broadening their influence.

Ethics approval required

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Ethics approval(s)

Approved 24/06/2024, Newcastle University Faculty of Medical Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Medical School, Framlington Place, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4HH, United Kingdom; +44 (0)1910 2086000; fmsethics@ncl.ac.uk), ref: 2777/46604

Primary study design

Observational

Study design

Observational single-centre longitudinal cohort study

Study type(s)

Other, Prevention, Quality of life

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Prevention of drop-out from sport

Interventions

Participants will be recruited at the start of the new football season (August - September 2024). Participants will be sent a questionnaire every four months for two years on their sport participation. This focuses on football but also covers other sports and clubs. Any participants who stop playing will be asked to complete a questionnaire on their reasons for stopping, with the option to speak to the study team to give more context and detail. The study plans to continue for at least two seasons, with the final data collection at the beginning of the third season (September 2026) (maximum of 9 questionnaires for those who are still playing and complete the study).

Intervention Type

Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

The following primary feasibility outcome measures will be measured using data collected in study records at the end of the study:

1. Recruitment - how many girls and parents can we recruit out of those available?
2. Retention - how many participants stay engaged with the project?

3. Acceptability - do participants find the nature of the study acceptable? is measured by the number of questionnaires completed, and with follow-up questionnaires or interviews after the study

Key secondary outcome(s)

1. Main reasons for girls' participation in football measured using data collected in questionnaires every four months at up to three timepoints per playing season, for two seasons
2. Main difficulties identified by the girls measured using data collected in questionnaires every four months up to three timepoints per playing season, for two seasons
3. Reasons for drop-out measured using data collected in questionnaires every four months up to three timepoints per playing season, for two seasons and interview at drop-out

Completion date

31/12/2028

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

1. Girls aged 10-16 years old registered with a club playing in the Northumberland Football Association leagues
2. (Optional) their parent/carer

Participant type(s)

Population

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Child

Lower age limit

10 Years

Upper age limit

16 Years

Sex

Female

Key exclusion criteria

1. Aged under 10 years old
2. Aged 17 years old and over

Date of first enrolment

01/08/2024

Date of final enrolment

30/11/2024

Locations

Countries of recruitment

United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre

Newcastle University

Medical School,
Framlington Place
Newcastle upon Tyne
United Kingdom
NE2 4HH

Study participating centre

Northumberland Football Association

Whitley Park
Whitley Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
United Kingdom
NE12 9FA

Sponsor information

Organisation

Newcastle University

ROR

<https://ror.org/01kj2bm70>

Funder(s)

Funder type

University/education

Funder Name

Newcastle University

Alternative Name(s)

Funding Body Type

Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype

Universities (academic only)

Location

United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

The datasets generated during and analysed during the current study will be available upon request from Dr Laura Basterfield, laura.basterfield@ncl.ac.uk

IPD sharing plan summary

Available on request