

Children  
Report Card  
September 2021

Health and Wellbeing Service

# Getting Active in the Great Outdoors

In children and young people, regular physical activity contributes to brain development, learning and attainment, better mental health, a healthy weight, develops muscle strength and builds healthy bones, reduces the risk of disease, manages existing conditions, builds relationships and social skills, improves sleep, builds confidence, encourages movement and co-ordination, improves concentration and improves health and fitness. Therefore, ensuring that all children are as active as possible is important for current and future population health.

However, many children do not achieve the minimum recommended level of physical activity. In children and young people the average level of physical activity reaches a lifetime peak around 5 years old and declines thereafter. Boys are more active than girls at all ages. Achieving higher levels of physical activity in the early years helps maintain higher levels later in childhood, adolescence and into adulthood.

Doing physical activity outside has additional advantages. When children and young people play outdoors, they have fun and benefit from running and chasing which can develop good physical fitness, agility and stamina, jumping and running which can develop bone density, large muscle groups and stability, climbing which can develop coordination, balance and strength, freedom to make noise and let off steam, connection with nature, increased Vitamin D uptake and reduced short sightedness. When children are used to playing outdoors, they are more likely to try new activities, engage with others, solve problems, explore the natural environment, make friends and show resilience.

Northern Area Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) Locality Planning Groups (LPGs) carried out a needs survey with children/young people and parents (CYP) in 2020. Physical activity was identified as a top need by children/young people (CYP) and parents.

During action planning the group decided to focus on encouraging children and young people to get physically active outside.

A sub group was set up to develop actions. One of the actions the sub group decided on was running a "Getting Active in the Great Outdoors" photograph competition where children and young people would send in photographs of them being physically active outside.

## **CYPSP Outcomes**

This aligned with CYPSP Outcomes, in particular:

- Children and young people are physically and mentally healthy
- Enjoyment of play and leisure

# How much did we do?

The competition was shared by all the Antrim/Ballymena CYPSP Locality Planning Group members across their social media, websites, and verbally in their drop in centres and during home visits.

There was 3 different age categories: pre-primary (early years), primary and post primary with 3 different prizes to encourage outdoor activity suitable for their age to support them to continue to be physically active outside.

## Get Active in the Great Outdoors!



If you're aged 0-18 and live in the Antrim or Ballymena area, take a photo of yourself being active outside and send it to

[healthandwellbeingteam@northerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:healthandwellbeingteam@northerntrust.hscni.net)

between **1<sup>st</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> August** with **your name, your phone number and your age** to be entered into a prize draw for the chance to win great prizes like a Fitbit, Fitbit for kids, trikes, water bottles, outdoor toys and more!

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Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership

# How well did we do it?

**96** Photographs entered from

**33** Children and young people



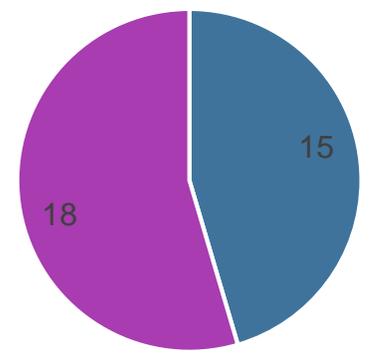
The age of children and young people that entered ranged from 8 months to 15 years old

8 months



15 years old

18 girls and 15 boys entered the competition



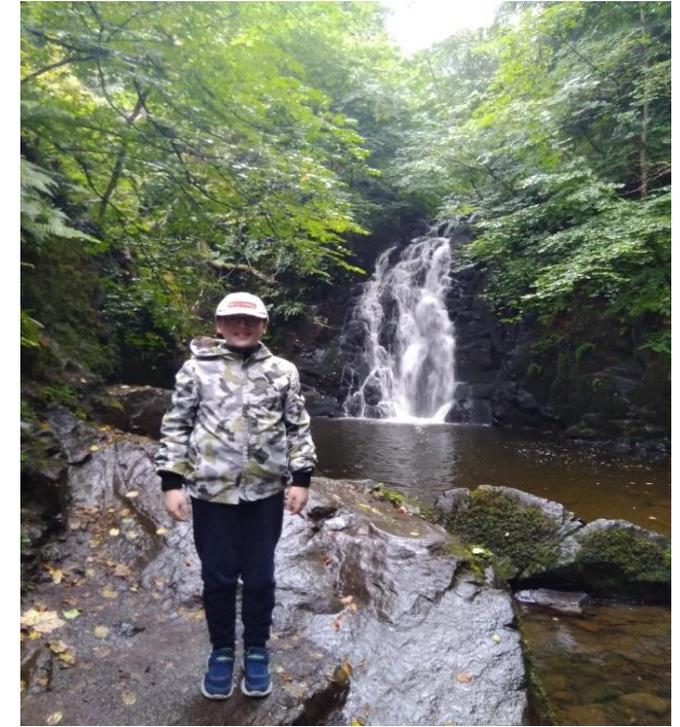
■ Boys ■ Girls



# Is anyone better off?



Everyone who entered received a Getting Active in the Great Outdoors goodie bag filled with things to help them continue to be active outside, e.g. sun cream, UV bracelets, water bottle, pedometer, Frisbee.



“He really enjoyed taking part and winning. Entering the competition has been great. All the things in the prize will help him to be active outside” Parent



“My kids had great fun getting active outside for the photo competition. The runner up goodie bag was great. It has lots of things to help them stay active outside as they grow” Parent