

# Finding out how the nation really feels about physical education

October 28 2014, by Luke Harrison

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A nation-wide survey, launched today, will use our memories of PE at school to identify how our experiences of sports days, shared showers and plimsolls have influenced our relationship with physical activity as adults.

The Big PE Conversation, conducted by researchers at the University of Birmingham, will spark the conversation and look to uncover what has inspired, or hindered, our behaviour in later years – with a view to shaping the PE lessons of the future to encourage a sustainable, healthy lifestyle.

As a nation, we are currently not doing enough physical activity to meet

the minimum required to stay healthy.

Professor Kathy Armour, Head of the School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation explained, "When you think about the money, and indeed the hours, invested in our PE curriculum, we really haven't done enough to understand how this affects our level of activity as adults."

"Though there is a great body of work on how investment translates into the performance of elite athletes and Olympics medal tables, this is an opportunity to help us to create more positive and effective PE and sport experiences for every child."

Evidence shows that the amount of physical activity undertaken by children decreases as they get become older. Ofsted have been critical of PE at primary school level and adolescents are turning their back on physical activity at an alarming rate: a trend that is particularly prevalent for girls between 11-15.

Dr Kyriaki Makopoulou said, "This survey can be a catalyst for how we design smarter curricula for the next generation of [school children](#). Without the data, how can we possibly be sure that what we are doing is right? Should there be more focus on team sports or individual pursuits? Does our geographical location determine how we perceive our school sports? These are the questions that we need help from the public to answer."

"Everyone has a story to tell; whether we remember PE fondly or in a less positive light. There is a minefield of myths and assumptions, I think, about what school sports are really like – and the only way to find out is to be part of a bigger conversation."

Alongside the survey, the team will be taking to Twitter to talk to the public about their most prominent memory of school sports using the

hashtag #bigPEconversation.

The team hope that the ensuing research will help policy makers create more positive and effective PE and sport experiences for school children.

The results of the survey will be submitted as evidence that can support changes such as; the type of training PE teachers receive, the range of activities offered in schools, the teaching approaches taken and the best ways to involve competition.

Professor Armour added, "We want as many people to take part as possible. It's high time that we really investigate what does – and does not – 'work' in inspiring lifelong engagement in [physical activity](#)."

To complete the survey, participants must be over 18 years old, be a current resident of the United Kingdom and have attended school within the United Kingdom.

**More information:** The survey is available at The Big PE Conversation: [www.bigpeconversation.com/](http://www.bigpeconversation.com/)

Provided by University of Birmingham

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