

Kit for All - reducing barriers to sports and physical activities in the Shetland Islands.

How-to Guide

This guide offers more detailed information and advice for those who may be interested in adopting or adapting the initiative in their local area.

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Title	Kit for All - reducing barriers to sports and physical activities in the Shetland Islands.
Lead Organisation	The Shetland Islands Council.
All Organisations	The Shetland Islands Council. RSPB.
Category	Promising Practice.
Poverty Impact	Mitigation. Raising Awareness.
Introduction to the Project	
Kit for All was created to remove barriers to physical activity in the Shetland Islands, encouraging the community to donate sports clothes and outdoor wear to those in need. It has since expanded to deliver year-round, operating from clothing drop-off and collection pop-ups around the Islands to ensure the project is accessible. Kit for All also have sportswear boxes located in the sports areas of some schools, which allows students to get sportswear when they need to. In partnership with RSPB, they also run a winter drive which allows the community to donate warm outdoor clothing so that everyone has something to wear to enable them to enjoy the outdoors during the colder seasons.	

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Initial Idea

Who had the initial idea?	Lesley Spence.	
How did the idea for the project come about?		
Part of Lesley's job was to work with different groups and get them into sports and physical activity. This included supporting them to try something new or even just come along to weekly clubs. When building trust and engaging with this population, she noticed that some of the participants did not feel confident in what they were wearing, or they could not afford to buy trainers, for example. Lesley felt these barriers to sport and physical activity needed to be combatted.		
Were plans informed by any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice from elsewhere?	Yes	
Practice from elsewhere: Lesley learned about a clothing drive in New Zealand where trainers were being donated to homeless shelters. Lesley discussed this model with her work colleagues; the challenge of trying to get people into sports and physical activity when the correct clothing and footwear was in itself a financial barrier to participation. Lesley suggested something similar to the project in New Zealand and the team adopted the project model.		
Was anyone else involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	Yes	
The Sports and Leisure Team within the Council Leisure centres. Active schools' team. Social workers. The Throughcare and Aftercare Team within the Council Community neighbourhood. Support workers.		
Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	Yes	
Individuals on the Throughcare and Aftercare Team have lived experience of poverty. They bounced ideas around and shared their opinions to find out if the project would be useful.		

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Was funding required to support the development of the initial idea of the project?	No
Which organisation provided funding?	
How much was required?	
What was the specific source of funding?	
Were specific resources – other than funding - needed when developing the initial idea of the project?	Yes
Staff/Volunteer Time	Yes, staff time to develop the plan and implement it.
Facilities / Workspace	N/A
Equipment	N/A
Local Knowledge	Local Knowledge played a huge part in developing the idea. Understanding what people needed and what was in demand was very important in the initial stages of the project.
Food and Drink	N/A
Did any barriers have to be overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?	Yes
The biggest barrier was storage space for donated clothing. It took a few years to find somewhere permanent to store the clothes and footwear. The space is now shared with the Leisure Facilities Team.	
Did anything in particular enable development of the initial idea of the project?	Yes
The generosity of early donations was a key factor in shaping the project. The high response rate highlighted the potential impact of continuing with the project. It inspired Lesley to explore how much more they could do to support community members and identify additional areas where help was needed.	
How long did it take between having the initial idea and starting the project?	Around six months. It took a bit of time getting around everybody and speaking to people. Time, for community members to grow in confidence and make use of the project offerings.

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Who made the decision to introduce the project?	Sports and Leisure management within the Council.
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Early Development

Was there a pilot project or feasibility study or test of change?	Yes, had a pilot project	
What did the pilot study involve?		
Kit for All started off as a pilot project to see if it would get donations, and collaborate with various community clubs.		
Who was responsible for the pilot study?		
Lesley Spence.		
Were those with lived experience of poverty among those involved in the design or delivery?	Yes	
During the pilot project, Lesley worked closely with care workers who contributed ideas on behalf of young people. The care workers shared valuable insights from young people about what they needed and why. This was often due to the financial constraints and the lack of availability of certain items locally. These conversations that were had at this stage inspire the approach of making Kit for All accessible through social work teams, children's residential services, foster and adoption teams to ensure that support could be offered anonymously via trusted workers.		
Was funding required to support the pilot study?	No	
Which organisation provided funding?		
How much was required?		
What was the specific source of funding?		
Were specific resources – other than funding - needed for the pilot study?	Yes	
Staff/Volunteer Time		
Facilities / Workspace		
Equipment	Donated sportswear.	
Local Knowledge	Local sports clubs.	
Food and Drink		
Was the pilot study evaluated?	No	

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Was there evidence from the pilot study that confirmed that it was working / it would work?	Yes
After the pilot project, Kit for All received many contributions which demonstrated strong community support. This allowed the project to be shaped around actual demand and gradually expand as required. The positive feedback from services that regularly used the project further contributed its effectiveness and impact. One Social Worker explained - One issue with starting new in the gym or an activity is the perception of themselves and their wish to fit in. It is challenging for anyone to take those first steps into sports, but this can be hugely exacerbated for clients with additional stigmas. Being able to access gym clothes helps individuals enormously as it allows them to 'feel the part', which in turn helps them to get through the front door and into the gym. Another Social Worker stated - Each of their clients have been impressed and delighted with the clothes that they have been given and they have been genuinely pleased with the quality of the items. Feedback was gathered at the recent Outdoor Clothing Swap Shop which strongly demonstrated the need in the community for such an event, and the value of it to those who attended.	
Who made the decision to continue with the project beyond the Pilot?	
Lesley Spence.	
Was the design of the project proper modified following the pilot study?	Yes
The pilot project was only delivered when Lesley thought people would be having a clothing clear-out, for instance spring summer and winter. One of the leisure centre managers saw how popular the project was and suggested changing it to be delivered all year round. The idea to expand the scheme to include an annual Outdoor Clothing Swap Shop was only introduced in 2024 and has proven extremely successful.	

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Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

Are potential users referred to your Service?	Yes
One way is through direct contact. This is where individuals can reach out via email or telephone. Another way is through referral through support workers. This is where support workers can make enquiries on behalf of their clients detailing items that they need.	
Are there ways, other than referral, that are used to make potential users aware of your Service?	Yes
Other than referral, Kit for All engages with the community through pop-up events. One pop-up is community events. This is open sessions where people can access sportswear and learn about the service. An example of this can be seen through community living well hubs, youth club sessions, and schools' family events/parents' events. Another pop-up is tailored group pop-ups. This is targeted events designed for specific groups or settings. This makes it easier for those who might not otherwise reach out to access support. For example, recovery sessions, Ability Shetland family event, foster and adoption events.	
What is the most common way through which users typically access your Service?	
Through pop-up Kit for All stands.	
Do you take steps to keep in touch / reach out to users?	Yes
Most referred service users provide recorded feedback to their support workers. Schools, Sports Clubs, and individuals kindly take the time to provide feedback on how the project has helped them (individual, organisational, and team feedback recorded).	

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Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?	No
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project or in project <u>governance</u> ?	No
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved <u>in any other aspect</u> of the project?	No

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Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

Who is responsible for managing the project?	
The Sports and Leisure Department within the Council.	
Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project?	No
- Sports development in the community. - Managing Active Schools. - Outdoor education.	
What proportion of the manager's overall workload is given over to this project?	
Just a small proportion of it	
Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group?	No
Who is involved?	
How does it work?	
Are any other governance arrangements in place to review strategy and performance?	No

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Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

To the best of your knowledge, is the project aligned with national and/or local anti-poverty strategies and priorities (e.g., local authority or health board priorities)?	Yes
Kit for All has a knock-on effect that helps communities. It achieves this through promoting active sport, physical activity and being outdoors, which aligns with national policy. It also aligns with local policy. Clothes and shops are sometimes inaccessible in Shetland, with the cost of living also being higher than in mainland Scotland.	
In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this anti-poverty strategy?	Yes
Kit for All has recently been in the main Shetland strategy. While it is still early to measure the full impact, this inclusion is expected to raise awareness of the project and strengthen its visibility within the wider community. Being part of the anti-poverty strategy provides an opportunity to align with broader, anti-poverty initiatives, attract potential partnerships and ensure continued support for the work that is ongoing.	
Is the project part of any other strategy?	Yes
Kit For All is specifically included in the Active Shetland Strategy for 2026-2030 which is currently being developed	
In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this anti-poverty strategy?	No
Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment?	No
In your opinion, what has been the impact on the project of having this statutory commitment?	

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Funding

Is funding used to support the work?	No
Has external funding been secured to support the work?	No
Which organisation provided funding?	
What was the specific funding stream/source/scheme?	
How much funding was secured?	
For how long has funding been secured?	
Is future funding from the same external source a possibility?	No
Is future funding dependent on achieving pre-agreed outcomes or outputs?	
What are these conditions?	
Has a specific sum been secured from your organisation to support this work?	No
How much funding was secured?	
For how long has funding been secured?	
Is future funding from your organisation a possibility?	No
Is future funding dependent on achieving pre-agreed outcomes or outputs?	
What are these conditions?	
What are the future - longer-term - prospects for this work if existing funding sources were no longer available?	

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Staffing and Resources

Do existing staff from your organisation contribute toward the work of this project?	Yes
Role: Existing staff help during big projects or busy periods, such as the outdoor clothing swap, but day-to-day it is just Lesley.	
Are existing staff from the host organisation paid extra (for example, taking on extra hours) to contribute toward the work of this project?	No
Extra hours worked:	
Have additional paid staff been employed to contribute toward the work of this project?	No
Role:	
Is the post permanent or fixed term?	
Duration:	
Are volunteers involved in delivering the project??	Yes
Role: Some RSPB volunteers were involved in the delivery of the annual Outdoor Clothing Swap Shop event	
Are specific resources – other than staff/volunteer time and money - needed to support the delivery of the project?	No
Facilities / Workspace	
Equipment	
Local Knowledge	
Food and Drink	
Are any of the resources needed to deliver the project provided in-kind, rather than budgeted from project funds?	No
Who provides:	
Were new IT systems, additional software, or upgrades existing software (databases, Apps) required to deliver this project?	No

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Was additional training – for staff or volunteers - required to deliver this project?	No

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Monitoring and Evaluation

Do you – or other organisations - collect data on the project for monitoring or evaluation purposes?		No
Is there baseline data to describe what things were like before the start of the project?		No
Is the difference that the project is making measured or monitored by the host organisation?		No
Who within the host organisation is responsible for monitoring the impact of the project		
How often is the impact of the project monitored or measured by the host organisation		
What methods, techniques or strategies are used by the host organisation to impact of the project		
What information is collected by the host organisation about the project?		
Number of users		
Profile of users		
Experience of users		
Outcomes for users		
Anything else		
Has the data that has been collected by the host organisation been used to adapt the way the project works?		N/A
Has an external organisation been employed to formally evaluate the project?		No

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Who conducted the evaluation		
Details of the evaluation		
What were the key findings from the evaluation		
Has the data that has been collected from this evaluation been used to adapt the way the project works?		N/A
Is there an intention to employ an external organisation to evaluate the impact of the project in the future?		No
Is there an intention to undertake your own formal evaluation in the future to estimate the impact of the project?		No

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Impact

To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?	Fully met.
What difference has the project made?	

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The Kit for All project has had a significant positive impact on physical activity, social inclusion, and community well-being in the Shetland Islands. By providing free donated sports clothing, footwear, and outdoor wear, the project helps remove financial and social barriers that prevent people from participating in sports and recreational activities. This has been demonstrated through:

- **Improved access to physical activity:** The project enables children, young people, and adults to participate in sports, physical education (PE), swimming, walking, and outdoor activities without the added financial burden of purchasing suitable clothing and footwear.
- **Greater social inclusion and equality:** By providing essential sports equipment discreetly and voluntarily, the scheme reduces embarrassment and stigma associated with financial difficulties. It helps individuals and families feel included rather than excluded from community activities.
- **Improved physical and mental well-being:** Increased participation in sports and outdoor activities creates opportunities for exercise, social interaction, and improved overall well-being. For example, one individual was able to begin walking regularly after receiving a winter jacket and walking shoes.
- **Support for children and families:** Feedback from schools and frontline services indicates that the scheme has enabled children to attend PE classes, participate in sports competitions, and join football and rugby clubs. It has also encouraged younger children, particularly girls, to try new sports.
- **Reduced financial pressure:** The availability of donated clothing and footwear helps families manage the rising cost of living while ensuring that children and adults can access activities that might otherwise be unaffordable.
- **Stronger community partnerships:** Collaboration between Shetland Islands Council, schools, social workers, community organisations, and local events has increased awareness of the scheme and improved access to support, particularly in rural communities.
- **Environmental sustainability:** Reusing and redistributing sportswear and footwear reduces waste and extends the useful life of donated items, promoting more sustainable consumption within the community.
- **Increased accessibility in rural areas:** The expansion of donation and collection points across Shetland helps people in rural communities access suitable clothing and footwear, reducing geographical barriers to participation.

Overall, the Kit for All project continues to demonstrate how a community-led initiative can improve equality, inclusion, and well-being by addressing practical barriers to physical activity. More than 400 individuals collected sports or outdoor clothing and footwear in the last year, showing the scheme's reach and demand. Although its full impact is difficult to

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measure because collections are often anonymous, feedback from schools and frontline services shows that the support has made a real difference to people's ability to participate in sports, enjoy outdoor activities, and feel included in their communities. By combining social support with environmental sustainability, the project contributes to a healthier, more inclusive, and more connected Shetland community.

Have conditions or demand changed since the project was introduced?

Yes

There has been continuous growth in the volume and variety of items distributed, reflecting increasing demand for the service.

Has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand?

Yes

There has been continuous growth in the volume and variety of items distributed, reflecting increasing demand for the service.

Has the project changed through time?

Yes

What changed

There was an introduction of the Kit for All Boot Box.
There was a Winter Clothing Clothes Swap in Partnership with RSPB.

Why has it changed

The Kit for All Boot Box was a dedicated initiative for rugby and football boots, offering preloved boots that users can borrow, use and donate back should they wish. This was introduced to make participation in team sports more accessible and sustainable.

The RSPB Clothes Swap began after RSPB requested suitable footwear and clothing for their outdoor events. In response, Kit for All launched a clothes swap to promote outdoor activity, this ensured people has appropriate clothing and highlighted the benefits of connecting with nature.

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Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?	Yes
The positive effect it has had on people was unexpected. Some people do not realise the difference a new piece of clothing makes to an individual's life. It was unexpected how appreciative people are when they receive clothes, they never thought they could have. There was an unexpected outcome of how much it boosts people's confidence and helps them try new sports.	
In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty?	Yes
Kit for All is having an impact on poverty. Kit for All is breaking down barriers to sport and physical activity through making sports clothing accessible to all.	

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Learning from Experience

What is working well?	
The amount of donations that Kit for All receive. How positively Kit for All is talked about in the community. The events Lesley attends to discuss the project is also working well as this helps raise awareness and foster change.	
What, if anything, is working less well?	
Nothing.	
What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners?	
Pick up the phone and contact different partners that would give you support. Spreading awareness through word of mouth is very beneficial for generating community support. If possible, access to different venues, as donation points are helpful for those in need and make the project more widely accessible to rural community members.	
Are there plans to develop or expand the project in the future?	Yes
specified.	
How easily do you think this project could be replicated in another setting?	
Easily, as it is a simple project to start. You can already see different local authorities starting similar projects. Inverness High School have a similar project, as well as Dundee, East Lothian and others which can be found in the link below. https://sportscotland.org.uk/kit-for-all	

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