

## **ORAL: AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON AND ANALYSIS OF SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DURING FIRST 10 YEARS OF LIFE IN UK AND IRELAND**

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Objective: Building on the authors' previous international comparisons (UK and Ireland) of children's and teachers' perspectives, the objective of this project was to compare and analyse the sport and physical activity (PA) of children during their first 10 years of life in the UK and Ireland. Method: The policy, practice and current PA and sport levels of children aged  $p=10$  years from 1999 – 2019 in the UK and Ireland were compared and analysed. The authors considered the many similarities and differences in sport PA in both countries, as well as the contribution of educational settings to these fields in children  $<10$  years. The influence of fundamental movement skills (FMS), active miles initiatives, the use of competition and the impact of families and peers were also considered. Results: Our results identified multiple documented benefits that PA has on health outcomes and the fact that physically active children are more likely to both participate in organized sport and remain active into adulthood. The results also highlighted that PA levels continue to remain low in both UK and Irish children in their first 10 years of life, which impacts on their FMS proficiency and their chance of succeeding in sport as they age. Active transport has the potential to support families, children and peers to be physically active, yet our results highlighted that 14% of children were not be allowed by their parents to actively commute to/from school in Ireland and numbers are continuing to decrease year on year within the UK, with only 46% currently actively commuting. Implications: Sport and PA participation remains low in both UK and Irish children. Schools provide an accessible platform to intervene. By providing specific training both within initial training (teacher training) and via continuous professional development, children will be supported by their teachers in progressing isolated skills into complex skills that will encourage PA and sport participation as they age. Furthermore, if infrastructure is developed to allow for safer active commuting streets, children and their families will be able to embed PA into their daily lives more easily.