Policy Brief 2

Dumfries and Galloway Physical Activity Survey

Physical Literacy – Building Confidence and Competence for Participation

Findings from the Dumfries and Galloway Schools Physical Activity Survey (DGSPAS) 2026

Prepared by: Lynne Mann and Lee Seton
Dumfries and Galloway Physical Activity Strategy Leads

Dumfries and Galloway Council

Working together for the future of health and social care
Dumfries and Galloway Health and Social Care

Why this briefing matters

These briefings use local evidence from the Dumfries and Galloway Schools Physical Activity Survey (2026) to support delivery of the Physical Activity Strategy 2025–2030.

They are designed to:

- provide clear evidence to support decision-making
- highlight where change is needed
- guide action across schools, health and communities

The findings show:

- activity levels are not improving in line with targets
- some groups are less active than others
- knowledge and motivation are relatively high, but this is not consistently translating into participation

About this briefing

- Based on DGSPAS 2026 (P4–S6 pupils)
- Provides local evidence on activity levels and trends
- Includes comparison with 2025 data

What is physical literacy?

Physical literacy is the confidence, competence, motivation and understanding that enable people to be active for life.

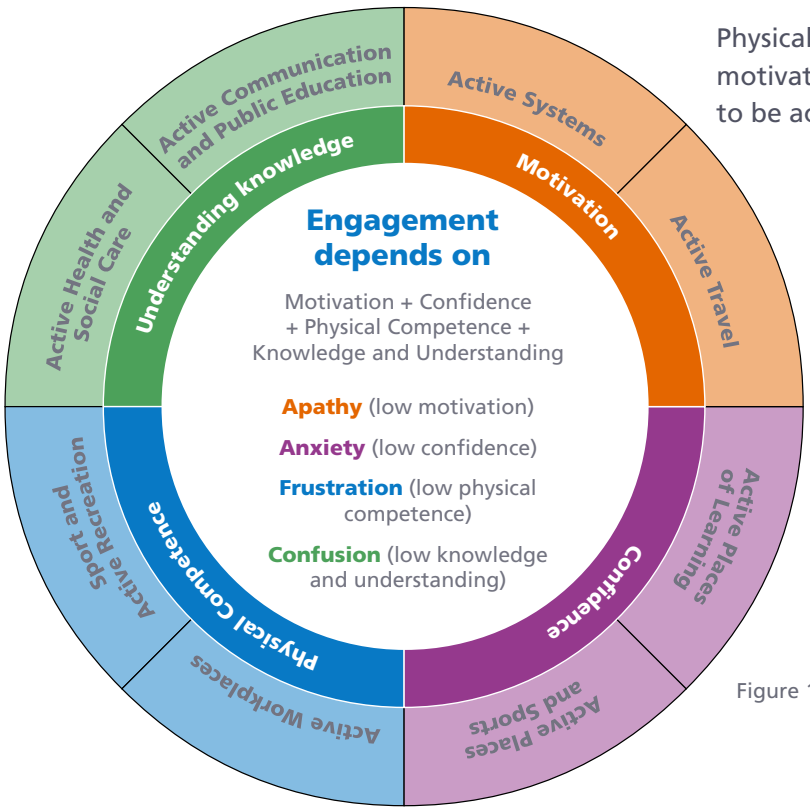

Figure 1.1: Physical literacy across domains

Physical literacy is recognised as an important factor associated with lifelong participation in physical activity.

1. Why this matters

- Participation depends on confidence and competence
- Without this, activity is not sustained

2. What the data shows

Scores are based on a 1–4 scale
(1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree)

- Physical literacy increases consistently as activity levels increase.
- Active pupils report the highest scores across motivation, confidence, competence and knowledge.
- Pupils in the very low activity group.
- Knowledge and motivation remain relatively strong across all groups.
- Gender differences are modest, although girls report slightly lower confidence and competence than boys.
- Some disability groups report lower confidence and competence scores than others.

3. What this means for Dumfries and Galloway

- Physical literacy is strongly associated with participation.
- Confidence appears to be a particularly important factor, with inactive pupils in the very low activity group.
- Girls report slightly lower confidence and competence than boys, although differences are smaller than those seen by activity level.
- Some disability groups report lower scores than others, highlighting potential inequalities in how activity opportunities are experienced.
- Improving confidence and competence may help more pupils participate in physical activity..

Physical literacy is closely linked to participation.

Active pupils report substantially higher levels of motivation, confidence, competence and knowledge than inactive pupils. While gender differences are relatively small, lower confidence among girls and variation across disability groups suggest that some pupils may require additional support to participate fully.

By contrast, the activity level gradient is substantial and consistent:

Figure 2.1: Physical Literacy mean scores by activity level

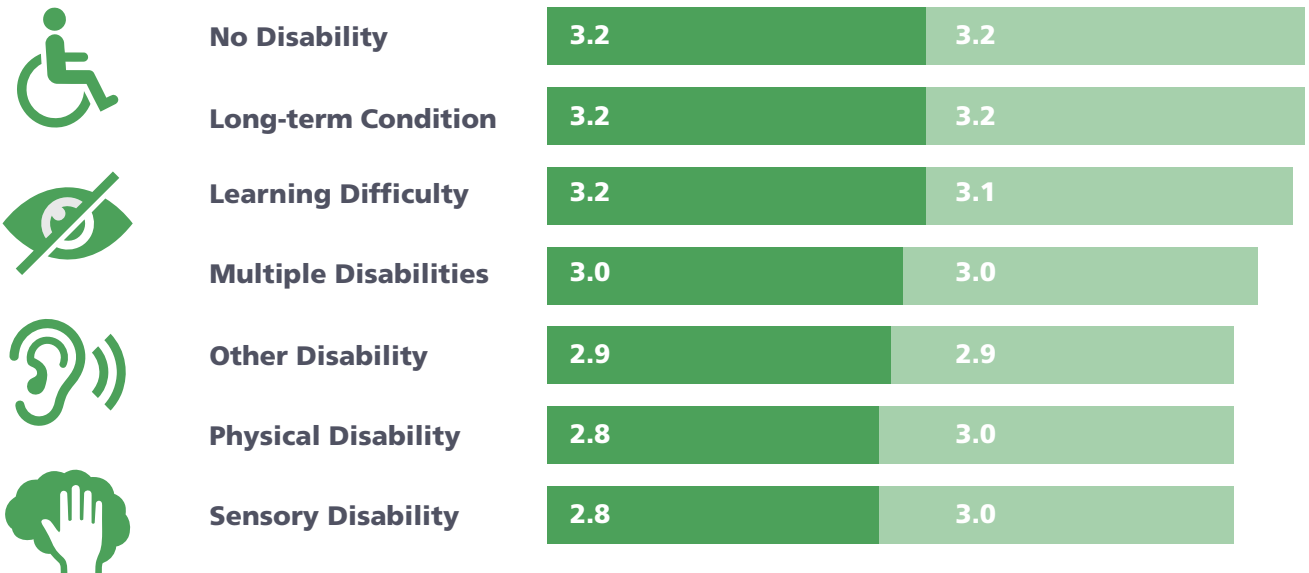

Figure 2.2: Confidence scores by disability group

4. Alignment with local policy and practice

Dumfries and Galloway Physical Activity Strategy 2025–2030

Outcome: Sustain participation across life

Action: Improve confidence, competence and inclusion

Evidence:

- Confidence and competence are lower than knowledge and motivation
- Physical literacy scores are lowest among pupils in the very low activity group
- Differences exist across disability groups

These findings suggest that confidence and competence may be important influences on participation, particularly among less active pupils.

Supports a focus on **confidence-building**, skill development and inclusive participation opportunities.

Dumfries and Galloway Best Investments (2025)

Supports priorities to:

- invest in **early intervention**
- improve **skills, confidence and inclusion**
- target **inactive and lower-confidence groups**

5. Implications for policy and practice

- Build confidence-building environments
- Provide supportive, inclusive sessions
- Target inactive pupils, girls, and additional needs
- Embed across schools and communities

6. Key messages

- Knowledge and motivation are consistently strong among pupils
- Confidence, competence and understanding are slightly lower than knowledge and motivation
- Physical literacy scores are lowest among pupils in the very low activity group
- Differences exist across disability groups
- Physical literacy remains an important factor associated with participation

Improving confidence should be regarded as a system-level priority, as it represents the one of the factors most consistently associated with participation to physical activity participation identified in the 2026 survey.

References

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