The impact of involvement in sport on psychological factors such as self-esteem and social networks for people with intellectual disabilities
Intellectual Disability

Setting Conditions
- Genetic
- Neurological
- Nutritional
- Social
- Trauma
- Etc.

Impacts Development
- At birth
- During birth
- Up to brain maturation

Impaired functioning
- Cognitive
- Social
- Vocational
- Increased vulnerability, physical, sensory, psychologic ally

Interventions

Canterbury Christ Church University
Potential life experience for people with ID

Poor physical health
- Obesity/under weight
- Untreated sensory deficits
- Untreated physical illnesses e.g. diabetes
- Very low fitness
- Low health literacy
- Etc.

Poor psychological health

Economically poor
Potential life experience for people with ID

**Poor physical health**

**Poor psychological health**

- High levels anxiety
- High levels depression
- High levels serious mental health problems
- Increased likelihood dementia

**Economically poor**
Potential life experience for people with ID

- Poor physical health
- Poor psychological health
- Economically poor
  - Very low income
  - High unemployment
  - Socially isolated
  - Few skills
  - Poor housing etc.
What we know about the impact of sport is....

Physical
• Fitness
• Disease resilience

Social
• Social networks
• Increased activity

Affective
• Alleviates anxiety & depression
• Increases self-esteem etc.

Cognitive
• Increased attention
• Increased learning
Given we know that people with ID are vulnerable to all sorts of problems that research has shown can be alleviated by sports participation........ what does research tell us about the involvement of people with ID in sports?

Not a lot
## A summary of the research

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<td>Moss S. (2009); Marks, Sisirak, Heller, &amp; Wagner (2010)</td>
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The state of knowledge – Physical (11 studies)

• Moderate to strong evidence that physical activity positively affected balance, muscle strength, and quality of life in individuals with intellectual disability.

• Research in this area needs to be translated into practice, specifically development of physical activity programs that are adaptable to the needs of individuals with intellectual disability.

The state of knowledge – Motivations (23 studies)

• Both exercise and sport-related activities seem to contribute to well-being;

• Increased perceptions of self efficacy and social competence;

• Improved physical fitness and elevated skill level gained during exercise and sport activities appear to serve as mediators.

Example of a research study carried out in the UK
Dr Clare Watts & Prof Jan Burns

Special Olympics

Canterbury Christ Church University
Psychosocial impact of involvement in Special Olympics UK.

Special Olympics (N 40)
- Social networks
- Self-esteem
- Quality of life
- Stress

Mencap (N 34)
- Social networks
- Self-esteem
- Quality of Life
- Stress

Matched
- gender
- IQ
- Opportunity
Quantitative Findings

- Self-esteem was higher in the Special Olympics (SO) group
- SO group had wider social networks
- SO group had lower stress levels
- SO group had more life opportunities
- Self-esteem was the best predictor of group membership
Qualitative Findings

- **Community**
  
  ‘Like playing sports, meeting up with friends and coaches, tell each other stories, made some new friends. Like the coaches they make it fun’

- **Self esteem, worth, confidence**
  
  ‘Being with the team, skiing is my life, I feel like a bond girl coming down the slopes’

- **Learning**
  
  ‘It keeps me fit and active. I meet new and different people. I can make decisions, go on holidays – it helps me learn new things for the future’

- **Fitness**
  
  ‘Like working out, like getting stronger’
Implications

Physical and psychological well-being

How it make me feel

Reciprocity

Support

Achievement

Challenge & Learning
Future Research

• Longitudinal studies needed to strengthen evidence base
• How effective exercise regimes might be adapted
• Early intervention
• People with Autism or Asperger’s Syndrome
Thank you

Any questions?