



SPARC 2019 Conference Report

6 November 2019

**Scottish Physical Activity Research
Connections (SPARC)**



SPARC 2019

The 4th annual Scottish Physical Activity Research Connections (SPARC) conference was held on 6 November 2019 at the John McIntyre Conference Centre, University of Edinburgh.

This event brings together practitioners, researchers and policy makers from across Scotland who are working to promote physical activity across all sectors of the population.

Following the publication this year of the new UK Chief Medical Officers' revised physical activity guidelines, our theme for the 2019 conference was **'communicating the message'** – how to ensure that policy, practice and research on physical activity for health are communicated effectively to all sectors of the community.

This was the largest SPARC conference so far with 180 registered delegates and 49 submitted abstracts. SPARC is organised by the Physical Activity for Health Research Centre at Moray House School of Education and Sport (University of Edinburgh) and Active Scotland Division, Scottish Government.



Photo credit: Actify

The day was a huge success and delegates enjoyed the range of talks, workshops, poster abstracts, active breaks and opportunities to network with colleagues across Scotland.

All talks are available to view on the **Actify SPARC hub** www.actify.org.uk/sparc To watch speaker's presentations, click on the highlighted names below. Interviews with our three main speakers are also available to view on the SPARC hub. We are grateful to Aidan Gallacher and Usman Tufail from Actify for filming and photography at SPARC.

The conference was opened by the Active Nation Commissioner, [Lee Craigie](#) who gave a hugely inspirational presentation and outlined her goals for getting the nation more active and in particular tackling the 'school run'.



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Our keynote speaker this year was [Professor Gerard Hastings OBE](#).

Professor Hastings gave us a *tour de force* of his insights from over 35 years of research on the impact of social marketing on other lifestyle behaviours such as smoking and alcohol. This was a thought provoking presentation which many will want to watch again.

In the afternoon, [Dr Charlie Foster OBE](#), updated delegates on the new CMO Physical Activity Guidelines. In his usual enthusiastic style, Charlie encouraged us to think about the theme of SPARC and how to communicate the message of these guidelines.

Workshop Sessions

Delegates were offered a choice of five workshops with the opportunity to attend two. The interactive workshops were all on the theme of ‘communicating the message’:

- Let’s talk about physical activity: communicating physical activity messages to the public. Facilitators: Dr James Nobles (University of Bristol) and Chloë Williamson (University of Edinburgh)
- Using marketing to communicate your message. Facilitators: Nicci Motiang (Scottish Government) and Jane Eunson (Ipsos MORI)
- Changing Lives through sport and physical activity – communication and leadership to ensure everyone benefits from sport. Facilitators: Linda Macdonald (Robertson Trust), Pamela Dewar (Sportscotland), Jacqueline Lynn (Sportscotland) and Fiona McLauchlan (Scottish Government)
- Using infographics and animation to communicate research and practice. Facilitators: Dr Ailsa Niven (University of Edinburgh), Dr Shaun Phillips (University of Edinburgh) and Dr Jennifer Duncan (NHS)
- Actify your work – how to communicate your research, policy and practice via Actify website go.actify.org.uk. Facilitators: Aidan Gallacher (Director, Agile CIC) and Usman Tufail (Head of Digital, Agile CIC)

Workshop reports can be found at the end of the report and we are grateful to all our workshop facilitators for providing these valuable sessions for delegates.



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Oral Presentations

Of the 49 abstracts submitted, six were selected for oral presentation based on their quality and relevance to the theme of communication.

Chris Kelly (NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde)

“Your Go To Guide to Physical Activity”: A communications approach to support health professionals refer patients to physical activity opportunities

Dr Niels Vollaard (University of Stirling)

Effectiveness and acceptability of a novel, time-efficient, workplace-based exercise intervention for improving general health in sedentary employees

Kirsty Rankin (Sustrans)

Creating a Cultural Norm for Active Travel in NHS workplaces

Dr Paul McCrorie (University of Glasgow)

How do we effectively communicate physical activity related evidence to children: A rights-based, co-production model to creating educational resources?

Kim Ludwig (University of the West of Scotland)

Text-messaging intervention to improve physical activity and sedentary behaviour in adolescents: A qualitative pilot study exploring feasibility, preferences and effectiveness

Dr Stephanie Adams (University of Edinburgh)

DataFit: Preparing children and adolescents to use their personal health data to become healthier, data literate citizens

The prize for the best oral presentation was won by **Dr Paul McCrorie** for his talk on communicating physical activity related evidence to children.



Poster Presentations

There were 42 poster presentations at this year's conference on a wide range of themes and there were opportunities throughout the day for delegates to view and talk to poster presenters.

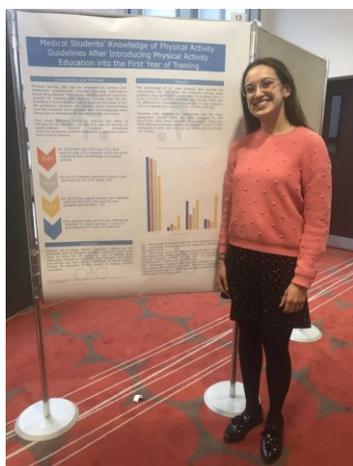


Photo credit: Actify

Prizes were awarded for 'best student' poster and 'best staff' poster.

Emma Sharland (University of Edinburgh) won the 'best student' prize for her poster *'Medical students' knowledge of physical activity guidelines after introducing physical activity education into the first year of training'*

Kieran Turner (Research Assistant, University of Edinburgh) won 'best staff' prize for his poster *'A qualitative study exploring the impact of 20mph speed limits in Edinburgh on walking and cycling'*



Throughout the day, we tried to keep the event as active as possible with standing areas in the main meeting room and everyone encouraged to give standing ovations to speakers.

During the lunch break there was an opportunity to take part in a 'silent disco' provided by **Gillian Machaffie** (Ya Dancer silent discos) and during the afternoon conference session, **Divya Sivaramakrishnan** (researcher and yoga instructor) led all the delegates in a five minute 'Bollywood' themed active break.

Following a survey of delegates, we received very positive feedback for the event with many people commenting on how much they enjoyed the active breaks and the opportunity to network.

PAHRC and Active Scotland Division would like to thank everyone who attended SPARC 2019 and hope to see you at next year's event. Special thanks to our speakers, oral and poster presenters, workshop facilitators, Edinburgh First and Actify for their contribution towards making this such a successful event.

Plans are underway for SPARC 2020 with the theme of 'children and young people'. The date is likely to be **12 November 2020**.



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SPARC Workshop Reports

Workshop 1: “Let’s talk about physical activity”: Communicating physical activity messages to the public

Chloë Williamson (PhD student at the University of Edinburgh) and James Nobles (Senior Research Associate at the University of Bristol) delivered an interactive workshop to delegates. A total of 116 people attended both workshops.

The aims of the workshop were:

1. To introduce the concept of physical activity messaging;
2. To provide some structure and guidance to create a physical activity message;
3. To enable delegates to develop their own physical activity messages.

Workshop content: After introducing the delegates to the concept of messaging, and the need for improved physical activity messaging in the UK, Chloë then went on to present her conceptual framework – developed throughout her PhD studies – which aims to provide a structure for developing and evaluating physical activity



Photo credit: Actify

messages. It challenges those using it to consider the specific aim of the message, to specify the population group being targeted by the message, to carefully consider the message content, and finally to think about the mechanisms for delivering the message to the public. James then talked through the work that the University of Bristol had undertaken within the last year, whereby they worked with four community groups to understand how physical activity messages could be communicated to under-served populations. Their work created a set of physical activity communication recommendations, which aligned with and complimented Chloë’s conceptual framework. The majority of the session (30 of the 45 minutes) was allocated to interactive groupwork, whereby the delegates used the conceptual framework and the recommendations to generate a physical activity message for one of six population groups – aligned to the recommendations from the Chief Medical Officer’s Physical Activity Guidelines.

Outcomes: Across the two workshops, 24 groups created a physical activity message which was targeted at one of the six population groups. Each group followed a standardised format – aligned to the conceptual framework – to help them create their message. After following this format, each group was challenged to create a strapline which represented their physical activity message. A prize was then awarded in the conferences' closing ceremony for the best physical activity message (chosen by Dr Charlie Foster and Professor Gerard Hastings).

The winning message straplines were:

- “Make Memories” (aimed at parents and carers of under 5’s) – from the morning workshop
- “Don’t stop me now” (aimed at older adults) – from the afternoon session

Evaluation: We asked all delegates to complete a short workshop evaluation form. We received a total of 59 responses across the two workshops (51% of total attendees). The results suggested that the overall perception of the workshop was highly favourable (rated 4.65 / 5) and that the majority would highly recommend the workshop to a colleague (rated 4.59 / 5). The qualitative feedback does indicate that the conceptual framework and the recommendations did provide structure for developing physical activity messages, with several people stating that they would use these guidelines in their day to day work.

Workshop 2: Using Marketing to Communicate your Message

Workshop provided by Jane Eunson, Ipsos Mori and Nicci Motiang, Scottish Government.

Aims: Our workshop aimed to give participants some inspiration and practical guidance for more effectively communicating their message using marketing. We sought to do this by illustrating a citizen-centric and needs-based approach with the current Risk Behaviours/ Wellbeing project in development at the Scottish Government’s Marketing and Insight Unit (MIU), with Ipsos Mori as a market research partner. This project seeks to address risk behaviours of smoking, alcohol consumption in excess of guidelines, low levels of physical activity and unhealthy eating via a joined-up initiative and supporting campaign. We outlined the



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MIU's 'SUSSED' model – Scoping, Understanding & Research, SMART objectives, Strategy & Idea, Execute, Debrief & Evaluation – we use this to develop all our campaigns. We introduced the idea of learning from 'positive deviants' - particularly those who have succeeded in behaviour change – members of a target audience who thrive better than their peers who have access to the same resources.

Ipsos Mori presented three stages of primary qualitative research undertaken on this project with members of the target audience and the key barriers and drivers to behaviour change. Needs identified by the target audience, which an initiative could usefully address, included being tired/ exhausted, anxious and stressed. Amongst risk behaviours, physical activity offers strong potential as a start point for behaviour change as there is high motivation to change this behaviour and an internal locus of control, when compared with other risk behaviours. Hence physical activity will be featured as a possible start point in the upcoming campaign, to be piloted in Fife in February 2020.

Outcomes:

- The workshop sessions delivered good participant engagement via questions and short exercises.
- Participants were provided with information sheets on social marketing benchmarking criteria to help in the development of their own campaigns.
- Participants were provided with recommendations on free resources to help better inform their own campaigns with audience insight, including search behaviours and behavioural insights.

Workshop 3: Changing lives through sport and physical activity – communication and leadership to ensure everyone benefits from sport

Facilitators: Linda Macdonald (Robertson Trust), Pamela Dewar (Sportscotland), Jacqueline Lynn (Sportscotland) and Fiona McLauchlan (Scottish Government)

The session provided a short update on the context for Changing Lives and how we can use sport and physical activity intentionally as a tool to achieve wider outcomes. The [Sport for Change research](#) in 2017 set out recommendations which are being rolled out nationally in order to make a difference for our communities and the individuals living within them. Sportscotland is leading on this work in partnership with the Robertson Trust, Spirit of 2012 and Scottish Government Active Scotland division. Changing Lives approaches are now embedded in sportscotland's corporate strategy '[Sport for Life](#)', a vision where everyone can benefit from sport. The session explored through input and discussion how we can best share this message to

heighten understanding, and influence and engage key stakeholders, as well as exploring some of the current tools that are being used to support Changing Lives approaches. The attendees further discussed how we can work together better to collate evidence and share this to best influence policy and practice in order to maximise these wider outcomes for our communities.

Workshop 4: Using infographics and animation to communicate research and practice

Dr Ailsa Niven, University of Edinburgh @ailsaniven; Dr Shaun Phillips, University of Edinburgh @DrSRshaunPphillips; Dr Jennifer Duncan, NHS @jenniferdunca10

The aim of our workshop was to discuss the case for innovative methods of communicating research and practice, and equip participants with some knowledge and tools to engage in this process. The focus of the workshop was on two modes of communication; infographic and animation. The workshop was designed to provide



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an introduction to what infographics and animation are, and to consider what makes a good infographic or animation. The workshop included interaction and sharing of ideas amongst participants by encouraging groups to critique existing examples of infographics and animation (from research and practice).

During the workshop we also aimed to provide guidance from our own experiences and the growing literature-base to help delegates in developing their knowledge and skills in this area. We also signposted to a number of existing resources and tools to assist in creating infographics and animation. In order to assist participants in accessing the materials we signposted to, we created a onedrive file with the workshop slides that participants could access directly (<https://tinyurl.com/SPARCWshop>).

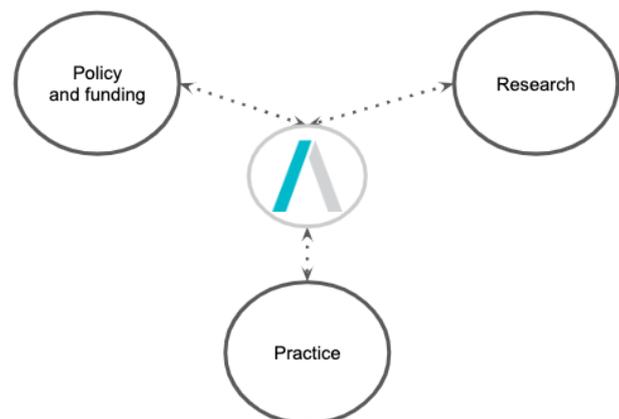
Workshop 5: Actify your work – how to communicate your research, policy and practice via the Actify platform

Facilitators: Aidan Gallacher (Director, Agile CIC) and Usman Tufail (Head of Digital, Agile CIC)

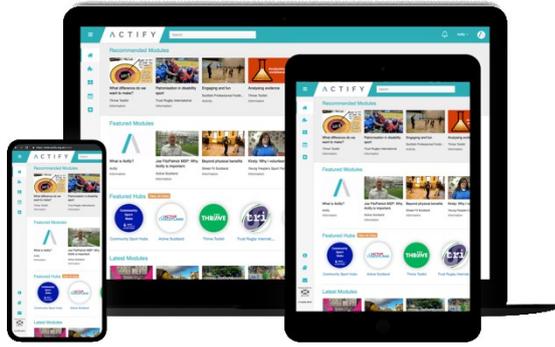
The SPARC 2019 theme of *'communicating the message'* – how to ensure that policy, practice and research on physical activity for health are communicated effectively to all sectors of the community is one that we discuss in the Actify office on a daily basis so we were delighted to be invited to lead a short workshop on our work and its relevance to the SPARC delegates. The plan was to cover four areas:

1. Context
2. Demo
3. How can Actify help?
4. Creating an Actify Module

After a slightly late start (a few folk getting lost and a few others not turning up) we kicked off with some brief background on Actify as a social enterprise and the outcomes we are working towards. We then talked about the process of developing our digital platform with the aim of providing a place where information, resources and data can be easily shared and accessed across the areas of policy, research and practice.



This led us into a live demonstration of the platform to help participants understand how it works and visualise how it could help them in their work. This section included an introduction to:



-A Hub, an organisation's branded space on the platform where they publish Modules and manager Members.

-Modules, a combination of text, images, videos and downloads that enables the communication of any message.

-The process of creating public, private and elearning Modules.

- The process of adding and removing Hub Members.

As a follow up to this, we asked participants to discuss in small groups: How can Actify help? There was a great discussion between a diverse group of researchers and practitioners that led us into an open Q and A with questions on: open access to the platform, current reach and plans for the future. All of these discussions were very positive with those contributing being interested in how they could utilise the platform in their work.

Our plans to get participants involved with creating a Module at the end of the workshop turned out to be slightly ambitious as discussions and questions took up the remaining time. This was unfortunate however we hope that the time spent on ideas and discussions was as valuable.

Thanks to those who attended and the SPARC team for inviting us to lead the workshop. For further information please visit go.actify.org.uk or email info@actify.org.uk