Background

CHILD UK’s Us Girls Rocks dance session runs on a Friday evening, 7.30pm-9.30pm from the Dance studio at Hertswood Academy (Secondary school), Borehamwood.

The session was developed as a result of consultation with female participants from the Borehamwood Doorstep Sports Club session. A group of young females would regularly attend the Doorstep Sports Club session, but didn’t join in with any of the multi-sport activities. Results of the consultation showed that the young girls weren’t interested in participating in the sports on offer which typically included football, street golf, pop-up tennis and dodgeball, but were keen to learn about fashion and beauty.

The concept of the Us Girls Rocks session was then developed. The session would be run by two female coaches, and would involve fashion and beauty activities combined with dance and fitness with the aim of getting some of the less-sporty participants more active, in a fun and informal way. A venue and coaches were sourced, and the Us Girls Rocks Dance session was launched on 1st March 2013.

Right Place

The venue is a Modern dance studio within a school which 90% of the participants attend. The school is in the heart of the local community, and is walking distance for most of the girls to get to and from the session.

The session runs between 7.30pm and 9.30pm on a Friday evening, attracting between 12-15 girls each week. The
session is a fantastic way to engage teenage girls at a time when they would otherwise be, 'at home watching TV, bored,' or 'hanging around on the streets with my mates'. A mixture of sporty and non-sporty girls attend the session each week, with the format of the session and the coaches working well to engage both.

**Format of the Session**

When the session first started up, participants would take part in the creative activity for the first hour and the dance activity for the second hour. The instructors initially found that some of the 'non-sporty' girls continued doing the creative activities throughout the whole session and didn’t join in with the fitness or dance activities on offer. The decision was then made to change the format of the session to Dance for the first hour, followed by creative activities such as nail art, or customising clothes for the second hour. This meant that all participants would take part in the dance and fitness activity, with the reward being the creative activity afterwards. This new format worked particularly well, as the 'non sporty' girls were now engaging in the dance and fitness as well as the creative element of the session.

**Right Style**

Retention is high for this session, with the same core group of participants attending week in, week out. The fun, laid back atmosphere of the session is largely created by the two dance instructors, who have a great relationship with participants. The instructors have created a very welcoming, social environment where the girls interact with each other. Participants are very supportive of each other, and the instructors encourage participants to welcome newcomers themselves.

The dance part of the session is taken seriously, with the instructors encouraging participants to try their hardest. They are friendly and relaxed with the participants but push them in the right way to improve their fitness and dance moves. The instructors will work well with 'non-sporty' girls, showing confidence and belief in their abilities. Thus the level of enjoyment is very high within the dance session, with lots of laughing and chatting between dance sequences.

Following this, the creative/fashion part of the session in the second hour is more laid back. The participants will get involved in nail art, hair, fashion, beauty hair or even video-making activities within a youth club style environment. This part of the session is very relaxed, with lots of chatting, and a great interaction between participants, and between participants and the instructors.

The instructors will change the creative activities every few weeks to give variety. ‘The combination of activities, along with the relaxed environment are key to making this session successful - like a trendy youth club,’ Instructor.

Within the second hour the music continues to play, creating a fun and vibrant atmosphere within the creative part of the session, and participants are also able to continue dancing and practising their newly learnt moves individually or in small groups, or with the dance instructor if they prefer.
Background Facts for Doorstep Sport

Benefits to Participants

The project has been described by the project leader and instructors as, ‘fun, happy, empowering, creative, friendly and great for fitness’.

One of the main benefits of the session is improved fitness and physical activity levels for ‘non-sporty’ girls. ‘We have made the fitness and dance aspect (of the session) fun, creating an environment for girls to improve their fitness levels without realising,’ Dance instructor.

Other benefits to the participants include increased self-confidence, creativity skills, team working, and the development of new friendships. ‘The girls often surprise themselves with how much they have improved - their dance moves and fitness levels.’

Progression Path-Way

As the participants progress within the session, their confidence and motivation will often grow. The project therefore gives participants the opportunity to attend an hour of dance (‘schway’) before the Us Girls Rocks session from 6.30pm to 7.30pm with the same instructors in the same venue. The Schway session attracts a slightly older age group, and is a perfect progression for the Us Girls Rocks participants if they want to push themselves a little bit further.

StreetGames

StreetGames is a national partner of Sport England and a centre of expertise for developing doorstep sport in disadvantaged communities.

The charity supports community based sports projects that deliver sport and volunteering opportunities to young people living in the 20% most deprived wards in the UK.

StreetGames works with National Governing Bodies of Sport to establish and develop links between community and mainstream sport. Recognised by the London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games Inspire Mark, StreetGames is creating a lasting legacy of doorstep sport in the UK.