Sports Club for Health (SCforH) **Textbook**

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Sports Club for Health

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- Kokko, S., Oja, P., Foster, C., Koski, P., Laalo-Häikiö, E., & Savola, J. (2011). *Sports Club for Health – Guidelines for health-oriented sports activities in a club setting*. Helsinki, FI: Finnish Sport for All Association.
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Sports Club for Health (SCforH) Textbook

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Introduction

What is the Sports Club for Health approach?

Sports clubs and associations are suitable settings for health promotion. Sports Club for Health approach is a way to promote health in sports organisations[1] by offering high-quality, health-enhancing sports activities. The approach is defined by seven core principles that you will learn about later in this textbook. By adopting these principles, a sports organisation can ensure it effectively promotes health as part of its standard practice.

For whom is this textbook intended?

This textbook has been developed specifically for current and future stakeholders in the sports setting. These include:

- individuals who are involved in sports organisations, such as directors, elected trustees, paid officials, coaches, instructors, and members;
- policymakers and other people who promote sports, physical activity, and health;
- physical educators;
- students and teachers in higher education courses related to physical education, health promotion, sports, and exercise.

1 In this textbook, we use the phrase "sports organisation(s)" to refer to both sports clubs and sports associations, except when we refer specifically to one or the other.

What will you learn?

By reading this textbook, you will learn:

- how the Sports Club for Health movement developed, as well as its current status in the European context;
- what defines the Sports Club for Health approach;
- the guiding principles of the Sports Club for Health approach;
- the benefits that sports organisations and their individual members can reap when they adopt the Sports Club for Health approach;
- physical activity recommendations for different age groups;
- the health benefits of sports and physical activity;
- and how to apply the Sports Club for Health approach within a sports organisation.

Main learning outcomes

Once you have read this textbook, you will have a thorough understanding of the Sports Club for Health approach and how to support its application in the sports setting. This knowledge will help you contribute to improving the success of sports organisations in promoting health. Improved health of the sports club members can lead to improvements in their sport performance, higher satisfaction with the club, and increased participation rates.

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Sports Club for Health movement: from an idea to a European-wide initiative

The idea to develop the Sports Club for Health approach was conceived in Finland in 2008 and was soon adopted as a European initiative. A total of 38 institutions from 18 countries participated in the development of the Sports Club for Health approach in three projects that were funded by the European Union, representing an investment of more than one million euros. In these projects, an international team of experts in the sports and health promotion field developed the approach, receiving support from the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission.

Several European umbrella sports organisations have supported the use of the approach, including the European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation (ENGSO), the European Federation for Company Sports (EFCS), the International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA), and The Association for International Sport for All (TAFISA). The Sports Club for Health Movement has also been continuously supported by the European Network for the Promotion of Health-Enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA Europe).

The key elements of the Sports Club for Health approach have been summarised in a book of guidelines recognised by the Council of the European Union, European Commission, and World Health Organization. Various Sports Club for Health initiatives have been implemented in 17 percent of the national sports associations in Europe, which is a good indication of their popularity. Currently, the Sports Club for Health movement is the largest European initiative for the promotion of health in the sports setting.

Sports Club for Health

The largest European initiative for the promotion of health in the sports setting

Funded by European Commission with **>1M Euro**

Conceived in **Finland**

Focused on increasing the availability and quality of **health-enhancing sports activities**

Developed by experts from 38 institutions in **18 countries**

Made in **EU**

Summarised in a **book of guidelines**

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Guiding principles of the Sports Club for Health approach

The primary aim of applying the Sports Club for Health approach is to improve the availability and quality of health-enhancing sports activities. People engage in sports activities for various reasons. In a recent European survey (Special Eurobarometer 472), 54% of the adult participants stated that their main reason for engaging in sports and physical activity is to improve their health. They also cited other reasons, such as to improve their fitness and physical performance, relax, and have fun. Achieving good health is not only the leading reason that people participate in sports and physical activity, but also a desirable goal for the sport community and society as a whole.

By adopting the Sports Club for Health approach, sports organisations can recognise the potential of their sports to improve health and organise and provide health-enhancing sports activities in their sports club settings. The approach can be used in sports clubs of any kind, regardless of the aims of the club, the sports disciplines offered, the club's status (voluntary or professional), size (small or large), or the age groups included in its membership.

What does using the Sports Club for Health approach really mean? Seven guiding principles define this approach:

1. The sports organisation promotes health-enhancing sports activities;
2. The activities are based on evidence-based practices that are well established;
3. The activities are designed and delivered by competent and qualified personnel;
4. The sports organisation promotes sports disciplines that are part of its standard programme;
5. The activities do not pose substantial health and safety risks;
6. The activities take place in a 'healthy' environment; and
7. There is a commitment to creating an enjoyable motivational and social climate.

The approach involves offering and promoting health-enhancing sports activities. By definition, health-enhancing sports ac-

tivities are all sports activities that produce health benefits while presenting no substantial health and safety risks. These activities are commonly aerobic-type activities of moderate-to-vigorous intensity, muscle-strengthening activities involving major muscle groups, or activities that are done with the aim to prevent falls and improve balance. By adhering to this principle, you will ensure that the activities offered at a sports club will help the participants meet the physical activity recommendations.

The approach also involves selecting and designing initiatives grounded in evidence-based practices that are well established and that have been commonly described in the professional and scientific literature. This process will ensure the effectiveness of the initiatives, while minimising potential health risks to the participants. Novel, continually emerging sports and exercise practices, which are often developed simply to increase revenue, should be scrutinised before they are considered as healthy, safe, and effective.

Sports Club for Health initiatives are carried out by competent personnel with adequate qualifications. The involved personnel must have adequate skills, knowledge, education, and experience, in order to ensure that the initiatives will be carried out using the best practices. The required education level is usually defined in national policies related to sports, physical education, and physical activity.

The approach involves promoting sports that are part of the club's standard programme. For example, this means that it can be used to promote volleyball in a volleyball club, tennis in a tennis club, and gymnastics in a gymnastics club. Adhering to this principle will ensure that the Sports Club for Health initiative efficiently uses the sports organisation's existing resources, such as facilities, equipment, marketing channels, and personnel. Such targeted sports promotion also ensures that carrying out the initiative does not infringe on activities that are offered by other local sports or fitness organisations.

The participation in Sports Club for Health initiatives does not pose substantial health and safety risks. Those applying the approach should use evidence-based strategies to minimise the risk of any adverse physical, mental, or social health outcome. In sports clubs, it is essential to ensure adequate environmental conditions and to use appropriate facilities and equipment, for safety reasons. Hygienic, sanitary, and safety norms are usually described in the health and safety regulations of the country or municipality in which the sports club is located.

To promote a healthy lifestyle, the Sports Club for Health initiatives are carried out in a 'healthy' environment. For example, participants should not be exposed to advertisements for alcohol, 'unhealthy' food and beverages, performance-enhancing substances, tobacco, or gambling. Exposure to such 'unhealthy' marketing campaigns at sports clubs and events may have negative impacts on the health intentions, attitudes, and behaviour of participants.

The approach involves creating an enjoyable, engaging, and empowering motivational and social climate. This is a crucial point, as it ensures quality motivation and positive social experiences for participants, which will reduce dropout rates and improve the chances that they will make a long-term commitment to the sports organisation.

By adhering to and promoting these seven principles, you will ensure that the Sports Club for Health approach is applied optimally within your organisation. In practice, this approach can be applied as an overall philosophy, guiding how the sports organisation works as a whole, or within an individual project or programme carried out in the sports organisation.

Guiding principles of the SCforH approach

- Promotes health-enhancing sports activities
- It is based on well-established evidence-based practices
- Uses qualified and competent personnel
- Promotes sports that are part of the club's standard programme
- Does not pose substantial health and safety risks
- Takes place in a 'healthy' environment
- Involves a commitment to creating an enjoyable social and motivational climate

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Benefits of the Sports Club for Health approach

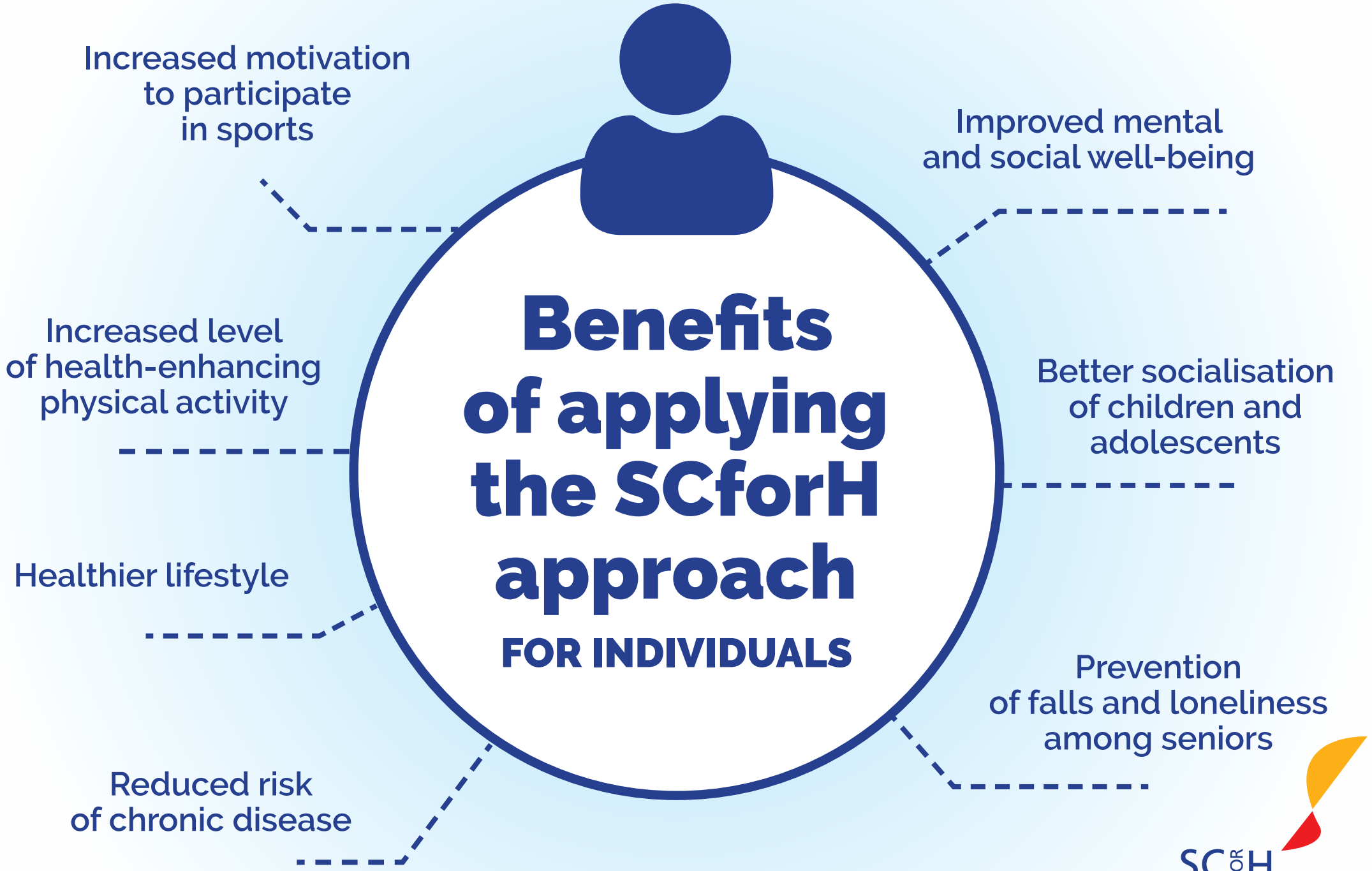
By applying the Sports Club for Health approach correctly, a sports organisation as a whole will reap multiple benefits. Some of these benefits are reaped by the individual members, while others are reaped by the sports organisation itself.

The key benefits for individual members include an increased motivation to participate in sports, an increased level of health-enhancing physical activity, support in maintaining a healthy lifestyle, a lower risk of chronic disease, better mental health, improved social well-being, better socialisation (particularly of children and youth), and a reduced risk of loneliness and falls (particularly among seniors).

By adopting the Sports Club for Health approach, a sport organisation can differentiate itself from other providers of fitness and sports programmes and, in that way, gain a significant marketing advantage. Organisations that offer broader sports club programmes, which are not necessarily directed toward achieving top results in competitions, will attract wider audiences, provide opportunities for people in all age groups to join the club, and increase participation rates.

Qualified and competent personnel who work together to create an enjoyable social environment that empowers, engages, and motivates members will improve their satisfaction and reduce drop-out rates. Promoting the good health of sports club members will encourage their long-term participation in sports and further reduce drop-out rates. Maintaining good health will enable athletes to achieve high levels of sport performance over longer periods of time, which will benefit both the individual members and the sport organisation as a whole.

Furthermore, applying the Sports Club for Health approach can reveal new opportunities to form partnerships with policymakers, researchers, and practitioners in the health sector. Due to the fact that the Sports Club for Health movement is the largest European initiative for the promotion of health in the sports setting, the sports organisation will become eligible for a wider range of funding opportunities. Finally, adopting the Sports Club for Health approach will strengthen the role of the sport organisation within the local community.



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Benefits of applying the SCforH approach

FOR SPORTS CLUBS AND ASSOCIATIONS

Increased participation rates

Healthier athletes perform better in sports

Reduced dropout rates

Provides opportunities for targeting members of all age groups

Greater club member satisfaction

Stronger role of the club in its community

Broader range of activities attract wider audience and new members

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Physical activity recommendations

To apply the Sports Club for Health approach effectively, it is important to understand which types of sports activities are considered as 'health-enhancing' and how much physical activity is recommended to achieve health benefits. For this reason, herein we have summarised the current physical activity guidelines developed by the World Health Organization.

Before we present these guidelines, it is helpful to define some commonly used terms in this context. Any physical activity – including any sports activity – can be classified according to its intensity. Vigorous-intensity physical activity requires heavy physical exertion and greatly increases breathing rate. Moderate-intensity physical activity requires moderate physical effort and results in breathing rates that are somewhat higher than normal. Physical activities can also be classified according to their type. Aerobic physical activities, also known as 'cardio' activities, are typically performed in a rhythmic manner over a sustained period of time and involve large muscle groups. Muscle-strengthening activities are designed primarily to increase the strength, mass, power, and endurance of skeletal muscles. Bone-strengthening activities produce tension force or impact on the bones, which leads to an increase in bone strength and density. Such a force is usually generated by the impact against the ground.

The World Health Organization recommends that children and adolescents engage in (on average) at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per day, most of which should be aerobic. Muscle- and bone-strengthening activities and vigorous aerobic activities should be performed at least three days a week.

Throughout the week, both younger and older adults should engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity or an equivalent combination of both. They should also perform muscle-strengthening activities, involving major muscle groups, on at least two days per week. Additionally, older adults should perform activities that are primarily designed to improve their balance on at least three days per week.

The World Health Organization suggests that it is better for members of all age groups to do at least some physical activity than to not engage in any physical activity at all.

Physical activity recommendations

Health benefits of sport and physical activity

To understand the health benefits of adopting the Sports Club for Health approach and to recognise the potential of a specific sport to improve health, it is necessary to be aware of the health benefits of sports and physical activity in general. The World Health Organization defines health as a state of complete well-being (including its physical, mental, and social components), and not just as the absence of infirmity or disease.

The five major chronic diseases, which are cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, and mental disorders, account for more than 85% of all deaths in Europe. Insufficient physical activity is one of the leading risk factors for such diseases, and it is responsible for approximately one million deaths each year in Europe or about 10% of all deaths.

People who engage in sufficient physical activity have a significantly reduced risk of adverse physical health outcomes. For example, studies show that engaging in sufficient physical activity reduces the risk of heart disease by 20%, type 2 diabetes by 31%, colon cancer by 19%, breast cancer by 13%, and asthma by 12%. Physical activity also helps prevent high blood pressure, obesity, and high cholesterol and improves physical fitness and bone health.

People who engage in sufficient physical activity also have a significantly reduced risk of experiencing adverse mental health outcomes. For example, studies show that the risk of depression can be reduced by 17%, anxiety by 13%, dementia by 14%, and cognitive decline by 35% by engaging in sufficient physical activity. Physical activity also helps improve self-esteem, body image, sleep quality, the ability to cope with stress, mood, and overall life satisfaction.

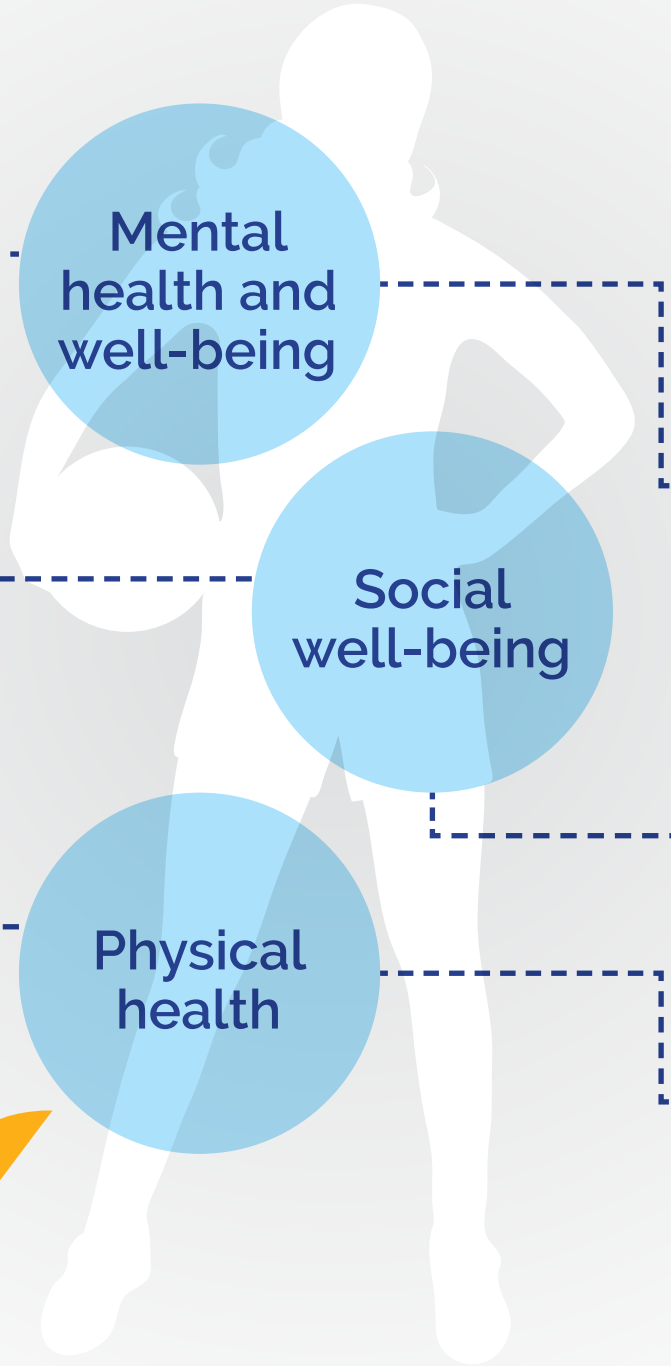
Engaging in physical activity also has a range of positive effects on social aspects of well-being. For example, it reduces the risk of isolation, alienation, and loneliness and may improve academic achievement, socialisation, and human relations.

Sports Club for Health initiatives can be designed to place a focus on improving any or all of the above-mentioned components of health.

Benefits of sports activity

Reduced risk of:

- Dementia
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Loneliness
- Asthma
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Type 2 diabetes
- High cholesterol
- Cancer
- Disability



Improved:

- Self-esteem
- Body image
- Mood
- Coping with stress
- Life satisfaction
- Socialisation
- Academic achievement
- Human relations
- Physical fitness
- Adiposity status
- Bone health

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Application model for sports clubs and associations

To apply the Sports Club for Health approach in your sports organisation, we recommend using a four-stage application model.

In the first stage, we recommend assessing the current goals and conditions of the sports organisation related to the Sports Club for Health approach. For example, you can identify the current development goals of the sports organisation, how it addresses health in its mission statement and in existing programmes, whether any approach similar to Sports Club for Health has already been applied, and what resources are available for the implementation of health-promoting initiatives.

Once the specific context of the sports organisation has been taken into account, we recommend you to select the most appropriate pathway for the application of the Sports Club for Health approach. If your sports organisation already operates in accordance with the Sports Club for Health guiding principles, you may choose to simply raise the officials' and members' awareness of this fact by labelling and promoting work that has already been done as a "Sports Club for Health" initiative. Alternatively, you can attempt to incorporate Sports Club for Health principles in your existing work. For example, you can improve health and safety features of your facilities, introduce new exercise methods suitable for people of different ages, or select a new target group based on the Sports Club for Health guiding principles. Another option is to develop an overarching strategy or action plan that guides and enables the broad application of the Sports Club for Health approach in the sports organisation. Finally, you can introduce a completely new, specific Sports Club for Health initiative or programme in your sports organisation.

In the second stage, it is important to:

- select the population group for which the initiative will be intended;
- identify the potential of your sport to produce health benefits for that target group;
- explore the club's internal and external (i.e. partnerships) resources by examining the personnel's expertise and the club's finances;
- establish a detailed time plan to achieve specific, quantifiable aims; and
- define operating procedures and specific actions that need to be taken.

In the third stage, you should start applying the Sports Club for Health approach, following the plan you developed in the second stage. In this stage, we recommend that you inform both members of the sports organisation and partners and associates outside the sports organisation (e.g. financial supporters and local government representatives) about the forthcoming actions. At this stage, it is also important to ensure that all personnel involved in the process of applying the approach have the required competencies. For example, if you initiate a new Sports Club for Health programme, the instructors should have adequate skills, knowledge, education, and experience to deliver this programme effectively. Once the initiative has begun, it may be necessary to make certain improvements or adjustments to the planned activities relatively quickly; therefore, you should also regularly monitor whether the activities are being carried out as specified in the plan.

In the final stage, you need to evaluate what has been accomplished, by reviewing the records made during the process of applying the approach and examining the achieved outcomes. By performing such an evaluation, you can plan and carry out other Sports Club for Health initiatives in future more efficiently. Finally, we recommend that you share your success story with people within and outside the sports organisation. This enables you to acknowledge the people and institutions who contributed to the success of the initiative. Sharing success stories can also help you further promote your sports organisation and strengthen its position in the local community.

Application model

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