

KEEP UP WITH THE PLAY CAMPAIGN BRIEF – FEBRUARY 2020



*Document for partner network and not for external distribution

CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Keep up with the play is a public awareness campaign targeted at those delivering youth sport, parents, coaches and administrators, to raise awareness of why we're losing young people from sport and what can be done about it. The campaign launches on 25 February 2020 and is driven by collective action and commitment by five of the largest participation sports in New Zealand (Rugby, Cricket, Football, Netball and Hockey) with support from Sport NZ.

BACKGROUND

The *Keep up with the play* campaign is informed by Balance is Better – an evidence-based philosophy developed by Sport NZ that focusses on the importance of fun and skill development to keep young people in sport and enable them to reach their full potential.

Rugby, Cricket, Football, Netball and Hockey along with Sport NZ collectively committed to a 'Statement of Intent' in September 2019 to drive bold changes in youth sport underpinned by a series of commitments.

The launch of the campaign in February 2020 intends to create an environment that supports the need for change, taking the messages to everyone involved in delivering youth sport, specifically parents, coaches and administrators.

CHANGING BELIEFS

The campaign addresses five behaviours affecting youth sport:

1. Early specialisation is good for development → multiple sports and a variety of skills are good for development.
2. Early success leads to adult success → young people develop at different ages and stages.
3. Applying an adult sporting paradigm to develop youth participants → understanding how youth learn and play by applying a participant centric approach.
4. If you're not in the top team, there is no point continuing → involvement in sport at any level or stage in life is better for overall wellbeing.
5. The harder and more often you train, the better you are → over training and over playing can lead to injury and burn out in young players.

KEY MESSAGES

The problem

- We are losing young people from sport and too many teenagers are walking away.
- They are missing out on the opportunity to be physically active and not reaching their full potential.
- There are a number of adult behaviours that are having a negative effect on the quality of experiences for young people or the opportunity to even participate in sport.

Making changes at grass roots

- If we're going to change this, we need to improve what's happening at the grass roots and many parents, coaches and administrators need to think and act differently.
- Parents, coaches and administrators need to think about how to put the fun and skill development back into youth sport.
- The lead motivation for young people to play sport is to have fun and hang out with their friends, so this needs to be at the forefront for young people to stay in sport.

What sports are doing

- Sport NZ is raising awareness of these adult behaviours through the Balance is Better philosophy (find out more at balanceisbetter.org.nz) and working with national and regional sport partners to promote change and create quality experiences for all young people.
- Five sports (NZ Rugby, NZ Cricket, Football NZ, Netball NZ and NZ Hockey) committed in 2019 to start making bold changes to their youth sport structures (e.g. changing competition structures, rep programmes and using young people to design sporting experiences), formally signing a 'Statement of Intent' in September.

- Momentum is building, and collective action and commitment is important to create the change needed at national, regional and local sport levels.
- It is an expectation of Sport NZ 2020-2024 Investment in youth sport that all sport partners align to the Balance is Better philosophy.
- Over the next four years more sports will publicly commit to the Balance is Better philosophy and communicate the changes they will make to their youth sport structures.

Supporting the campaign

- *Keep up with the play* is a public awareness campaign launching in February 2020 to raise awareness and understanding of the problems in youth sport. It is targeted at enablers of youth sport such as parents, coaches and administrators.
- Sport NZ encourage all partners (especially sport organisations) to support and promote these important messages throughout the six-week campaign.
- Kiwi sporting champions are supporting the *Keep up with the play* campaign and sharing their living proof stories.
- Go to keepupwiththeplay.co.nz to understand the behaviours, see living proof examples and what you can do to help.

THE EVIDENCE

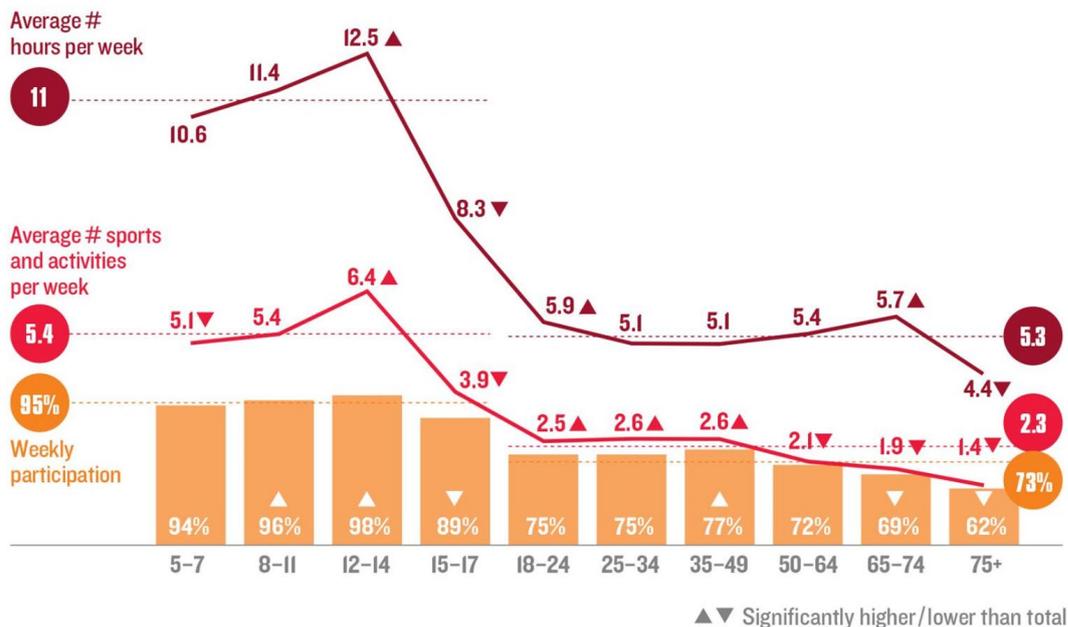
Active NZ data (Sport NZ's national participation survey)

When comparing 12-14 year olds with 18-24 year olds:

- Hours per week drops from 12 to 5
- Number of activities drops from 6.4 to 2.5
- Weekly participation drops from 98% to 75%

YOUNG PEOPLE

ADULTS



- Data also shows that the lead motivations for young people to play sport is to have fun (76%) followed by hanging out with family or friends (44%).

Further evidence

There is overwhelming research and evidence that support these changes, here are a few examples:

- Studies have shown the transition rate from being identified as youth talent to be an elite athlete is less than 10% (Australian study by Gulbin et al in 2013 said 7%).
- A UEFA study in 2007 found that 85% of 16 year olds who sign professional contracts are out of professional football by the age of 21.
- Secondary School Sport Census data shows that although school rolls have increased over the last three years, participation has dropped in inter-school sport.
- ACC statistics show a 60% surge since 2008 in sports-related injuries in 10-14 year olds – double the increase of any other age group. There are a number of reasons for the spike, but a growing concern is

that too much sport can be just as harmful as not enough exercise. ACC encourages the one hour for every year guideline, where the amount of organised sport per week – both training and competition – should not exceed the child's age.

- New Zealand research confirms international study findings: participating in more hours of sport per week than age in years; playing one sport for more than eight months of the year; and/or exceeding a 2:1 weekly ratio of organised sport to recreational free-play hours, increases the odds of reporting a 'gradual onset injury'.
- USA Ice Hockey has gone from a 40% teenage retention rate in 2010 to 90% in 2019 by rolling out a development model encouraging unstructured play in multiple disciplines, removing early rep programmes, and emphasising fun and development. The same model is now used by over 50 Olympic sports in the US.

WHAT'S NEXT

- Support the *Keep up with the play* campaign by sharing the messages at keepupwiththeplay.org.nz with sport leaders, parents, coaches, teachers and administrators – everyone has a part to play in keeping kids in sport.
- Parents, coaches and administrators need to think about how they can put the fun and skill development back into youth sport. Head to balanceisbetter.co.nz, a website created by Sport NZ with articles, videos, case studies and the latest advice on youth sport from trusted sources.
- If you're a national or regional sporting organisation, talk to the Sport Development team at Sport NZ about how to embed the Balance is Better philosophy into your approach for managing youth sport.