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## Increasing physical activity



# Increasing physical activity

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**Report presented by the Auditor General for Wales to the  
National Assembly on 7 June 2007**



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## Summary

- 1 Physical activity has many benefits for health, particularly in reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases, some major cancers, type 2 diabetes, strokes and obesity. Higher rates of physical activity amongst the population also have a number of other social and economic benefits. In Wales, the total cost of physical inactivity - to the Health Service and the economy as a whole - is estimated at around £650 million per year<sup>1</sup> - equivalent to over 12 per cent of the Welsh Assembly Government's (the Assembly Government) Health and Social Services budget.
- 2 Levels of physical activity in Wales are low, with only one third of adults in Wales carrying out the recommended levels of physical activity per week (at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise five times a week - the 5x30 target); and nearly a half of adults are classed as being inactive. Levels are also low amongst children and young people, with only 41 per cent of children (ages 7-11) and 24 per cent of young people (ages 11-16) carrying out the recommended amount of physical activity per week (at least 60 minutes of moderate intensity exercise five times a week - the 5x60 target).
- 3 The Assembly Government sees these low levels of physical activity as a long-term problem requiring a long-term solution. Its twenty-year strategy for sport and physical activity is Climbing Higher, published in January 2005. The strategy contains 11 targets<sup>2</sup> aimed at increasing levels of
- physical activity in Wales, with the main target being to 'match the best global standards for levels of sport and physical activity'. In July 2006, Climbing Higher - next steps was published, detailing areas that will be targeted for investment in order to make early progress towards the long-term targets set out in Climbing Higher.
- 4 The cross-cutting nature of Climbing Higher requires a number of public, private and voluntary organisations working together to encourage physical activity at local, regional and national levels, through a number of strategies, action plans and interventions. The complexity of the issue requires the involvement of a large number of organisations, but this also has the effect of increasing the risk of inefficiency and ineffectiveness.
- 5 We examined whether the public sector's approaches to increasing physical activity are coherent and working in practice, and whether they are likely to deliver Climbing Higher targets. Overall, we found that, at this relatively early stage in the process, two years in to the Assembly Government's 20-year strategy, major investment has been made and is planned for increasing physical activity, and some progress has been made in bringing the relevant parties together to tackle what is a complex cross-cutting issue. However, even though the Assembly Government has taken steps to address some of these issues in Climbing Higher - next steps, there is still a need for more

<sup>1</sup> At Least Five a Week - evidence of the impact of physical activity and its relationship to health, Chief Medical Officer of England, 2004. See Appendix 1

<sup>2</sup> Four other targets in Climbing Higher relate to elite sport, and one to job creation



co-ordination of effort on the part of all those involved: more leadership at a national level and a greater alignment of strategies and plans across local and national government. There is also a need for more effective evaluation and a performance management framework to support Climbing Higher - including a solid evidence base and more robust data. The Assembly Government has plans to address these issues and intends that a cross-departmental group within the Assembly Government, advised by key stakeholders, will help take Climbing Higher forward.

**As a cross-cutting issue, increasing physical activity requires strong leadership and the alignment of strategies and plans**

6 In order to deliver Climbing Higher targets within a complex and multi-agency environment, there is a need for strong and effective leadership to manage the delivery chain (see box below). At present, roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for increasing physical activity are not defined. Neither is there any named responsibility for increasing physical activity and no national cross-departmental/agency group to oversee the implementation, co-ordination and achievement of Climbing Higher. This increases the potential for confusion, duplication of effort and inefficiency. Efforts to increase physical activity in Wales have been largely driven at both the national and local levels by sports and leisure departments. This poses the risk of deterring people who have no interest in sport and failing to gain the support and investment from other agencies.

7 Throughout the period of our review, the Assembly Government has been working with the Sports Council for Wales (the Sports Council) to redefine their respective roles and responsibilities in line with the First Minister's statement on Assembly Government Sponsored Public Body reform in November 2004. It is possible that this has led to some confusion about where leadership rests, given the transfer of responsibility for policy and strategy from the Sports Council to the Assembly Government.

**Delivery chain**

A 'delivery chain' refers to the complex networks of organisations, including central and local government, Assembly Government Sponsored Public Bodies and organisations from the private and voluntary sectors that need to work together to achieve or deliver an improved public sector outcome or Assembly Government target.

8 With a number of organisations working to deliver Climbing Higher targets, it is essential that relevant strategies and plans align. We found inconsistencies in how Climbing Higher and Climbing Higher - next steps take into account other policies and policy areas; and, conversely, how their aspirations are taken into account in other strategies and plans. For example, only seven local authorities have stand-alone physical activity strategies and no local authority regards increasing physical activity as an important strategic issue in its Community Strategy. And our review of Health, Social Care and Wellbeing strategies<sup>3</sup> found that, despite the provision of guidance to bodies on how best to prepare them, physical activity had little prominence as an issue in improving health and wellbeing in the local population. The Assembly Government is intending to

<sup>3</sup> Strategies which are jointly developed by local health boards and local authorities





issue some further guidance later in 2007 on the development of the next round of Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Strategies. It is also seeking to encourage closer links with the nutrition agenda.

- 9 The long time-span needed to achieve Climbing Higher targets stems from the cultural change required in the way that the people of Wales think and behave in relation to sport and physical activity. While Climbing Higher - next steps provides details on the planned investment in physical activity over the next few years, it is not an Action Plan that can focus effort on achieving Climbing Higher targets as it does not provide firmer details on who should do what and the expectations of the numerous delivery partners. The Assembly Government told us that it was intending to develop an integrated action plan that would address these issues by the end of 2007. Once produced, this action plan will be a key factor in determining the success or otherwise of the aspirations set out in Climbing Higher.

- 10 Other factors that affect the ability of the Welsh public sector to deliver Climbing Higher are funding arrangements and partnership working. Even though Climbing Higher contains 20-year targets, the majority of interventions - and hence their funding - are between three and five years in duration, partly as the inevitable result of the political cycle. Short-term funding brings a number of associated problems including hindering long-term planning, and potentially limiting the scope for using local initiative.
- 11 Effective partnership working, focused on results, is vital in managing an issue where there are a number of organisations involved. However, effective partnership working is, at present, patchy with no delivery partnership at a national level, nor is there any evidence of regional approaches - such as sharing facilities and resources - being adopted. Only 11 physical activity networks or partnerships are in existence across the 22 local authorities in Wales. In a number of cases, where partnerships are in existence, they are mainly set up for scheme-specific purposes and work in isolation, rather than addressing physical activity in the round. The Assembly Government has, though, set up the Physical Activity Network Wales to try and link local partnerships together.

### **Evaluation and performance measurement is essential in achieving Climbing Higher targets**

- 12 The required change in strategic focus in encouraging physical activity will only come about through challenging existing practices. These have traditionally been focused on the development of traditional sport and the provision of sport and leisure facilities and have led to relatively static levels of physical activity. In order for change in strategic focus to occur, all plans and actions for increasing physical activity need to be underpinned by a





firm evidence base to ensure resources are targeted at those areas likely to have most impact, together with robust evaluation of outputs and outcomes. However, neither Climbing Higher nor Climbing Higher - next steps set out comprehensive and specific evaluation mechanisms or performance management arrangements and some schemes were developed without a firm evidence base.

- 13** In addition, our analysis of the 11 targets in Climbing Higher relating to increasing physical activity found that only four had mechanisms in place for measurement; only seven targets have baselines from which to track progress; and generally the targets lack periodic milestones against which short-term improvement might be measured. For example, the target for all public sector employees and three-quarters of all other employees to have access to sport and physical activity facilities, at or within a 10-minute walk of the workplace, does not specify what constitutes a sport and physical activity facility, has no baseline and cannot currently be measured.
- 14** The majority of interventions are short term in nature which makes it difficult to assess their effect on outcomes, which often require long-term behavioural and cultural change. The Assembly Government and its delivery partners are also hindered by a lack of quality data. To help overcome these difficulties, the Assembly Government has set up a Research and Evaluation group, including representation from the Sports Council, as part of a wider move to bring together the policy, research and evaluation capacity of both organisations. In addition, the Welsh Local Government Data Unit has set up a Reference group to develop a set of indicators for local authorities to support Climbing Higher. At present, authorities use only one indicator related to physical activity.

## Recommendations

### Climbing Higher implementation

- i** Achievement of the aspirations set out in Climbing Higher is dependent on the concerted, co-ordinated effort of a wide range of public sector organisations, including a number of policy directorates in the Assembly Government, the Sports Council and local authorities. Better co-ordination of effort requires clearer identification of where the responsibility (and accountability) for achieving Climbing Higher targets is vested. The key organisations should then be better placed to clarify the roles and responsibilities of all the various parties involved in physical activity, as these have not always been clear in relation to Climbing Higher.
  - a** The Assembly Government should establish a high-level Climbing Higher steering group to provide leadership and oversee the implementation, co-ordination, and achievement of Climbing Higher.
  - b** In parallel with the previous recommendation, the Assembly Government should appoint a named individual with responsibility for overseeing and co-ordinating all physical activity work in Wales.
  - c** The Assembly Government, in consultation with its partners, should clearly define and agree roles and responsibilities and accountabilities for action between the leading organisations involved in the delivery of the physical activity agenda, and clearly set out how roles and responsibilities fit together.

## Physical activity funding

- ii Those bodies responsible for delivery, such as local authorities, Local Health Boards (LHBs) and voluntary sector organisations, are hindered by various factors relating to funding: its short-term nature, the number of funding streams, and funding not being flexible enough to adapt to local needs.
  - a The Assembly Government and its delivery partners, should carry out a detailed assessment of its funding strategy for supporting physical activity and delivering Climbing Higher targets; allowing for the flexibility to enable recipients to adapt projects to their local needs and encourage greater innovation.

## Alignment of plans

- iii Climbing Higher sets the overall direction for increasing physical activity in Wales. But given that a wide range of organisations in Wales, within and outside the Assembly Government, need to take action to achieve its targets, it is important that all relevant strategies are pointing in the same direction. This is particularly important in the case of local authorities, a key delivery agent in terms of physical activity, where relevant strategies include the Community Strategy and Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Strategy.
  - a All relevant national, regional and local plans and strategies should recognise their potential to contribute to Climbing Higher, and identify how they can help achieve its targets. Local physical activity plans are likely to be most effective if they are developed in partnership with all relevant local authority departments as well as LHBs, the Sports Council and any other relevant public, private or voluntary local organisations.

## Challenge and evaluation

- iv There has been relatively little increase in physical activity levels in recent years. This means that the Assembly Government and its local authority and health board partners need to fundamentally challenge and evaluate current public sector approaches to increasing physical activity in order to determine their effectiveness and appropriateness in meeting the aspirations set out in Climbing Higher. Effective evaluation would examine whether resources are being used efficiently; demonstrate impact and ensure accountability; and inform future policy and strategy.
  - a The Assembly Government and its partners should draw up a research and evaluation plan for Climbing Higher.
  - b The Assembly Government should establish an evaluation and monitoring framework to support the policy direction set out in Climbing Higher, that:
    - embeds Climbing Higher targets into all stakeholder plans;
    - clarifies and further defines targets; and
    - clarifies responsibilities for data collection and performance monitoring.

## Free Swimming

- v Since 2003, the Assembly Government has been piloting the provision of free swimming for children and older people throughout Wales, as a major scheme for increasing physical activity. The final evaluation of the scheme is not due until later in 2007, but the work done so far, together with our own analysis, indicates that there is scope for improvement, especially in terms of determining whether the scheme is delivering value for money.



- a** The Assembly Government should set national targets for participation in its Free Swimming initiative against the scheme's key objectives.
- b** The Assembly Government and Sports Council should evaluate whether the scheme has delivered value for money.
- c** Funding provided by the Assembly Government to local authorities should be linked to performance.
- d** Local delivery plans for the Free Swimming initiative should contain all the required information to ensure that all key criteria have been met, including consistent evaluation mechanisms.

# Part 1 - Physical activity has many benefits, particularly for health, but provision of services aimed at increasing physical activity is dependent on a complex delivery chain

## Physical activity has many benefits, particularly for health

**1.1** The benefits of physical activity for personal health are now widely understood and accepted. According to a report by the Chief Medical Officer in England (see [Appendix 1](#)), there is compelling evidence to suggest that regular physical activity can reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases, some cancers, type 2 diabetes, strokes and obesity, and that it can maintain mental health. In recognition of the importance of physical activity, and in response to the rising global figures for morbidity caused by diet and physical inactivity, in 2004 the World Health Organisation passed a resolution urging members to develop, implement and evaluate actions that promote individual and community health through physical activity and to promote lifestyles that include physical activity.

**1.2** The financial costs associated with physical inactivity are significant, although they are difficult to quantify precisely owing to the complexities in attributing illness solely to physical inactivity. However, the Chief Medical Officer report, referred to in the previous paragraph, puts the annual costs of physical inactivity in England at £8.2 billion, including healthcare costs and costs to the economy such as absence from work. This sum does

not include the contribution of inactivity to obesity - estimated at £2.5 billion to the economy each year<sup>4</sup>. On a proportionate basis, based on the relative populations of England and Wales, this would mean that the total cost of physical inactivity in Wales was around £650 million - equivalent to over 12 per cent of the Assembly Government's Health and Social Services budget.

**1.3** Although problems caused by physical inactivity are increasingly becoming a global issue, a number of indicators point to particular health problems experienced in Wales:

- 18 per cent of adults are obese and 36 per cent are overweight<sup>5</sup>;
- 22 per cent of children and adolescents are obese or overweight. In a comparison of 34 countries, only Malta and USA reported higher figures<sup>6</sup>;
- 22 per cent of the population of the South Wales valleys reported having coronary heart disease<sup>7</sup>; and
- five per cent of the adult population of Wales have diabetes.

<sup>4</sup> National Audit Office report, Tackling obesity in England, HC220, February 2001

<sup>5</sup> Welsh Health Survey 2004, Welsh Assembly Government

<sup>6</sup> Janssen I et al. Comparison of overweight and obesity prevalence in school-aged youth from 34 countries and their relationships with physical activity and dietary patterns. *Obesity Reviews* 2005; 6: 123-132

<sup>7</sup> Williams S, *Active Lives: Physical Activity in Disadvantaged Communities*, Bevan Foundation 2006

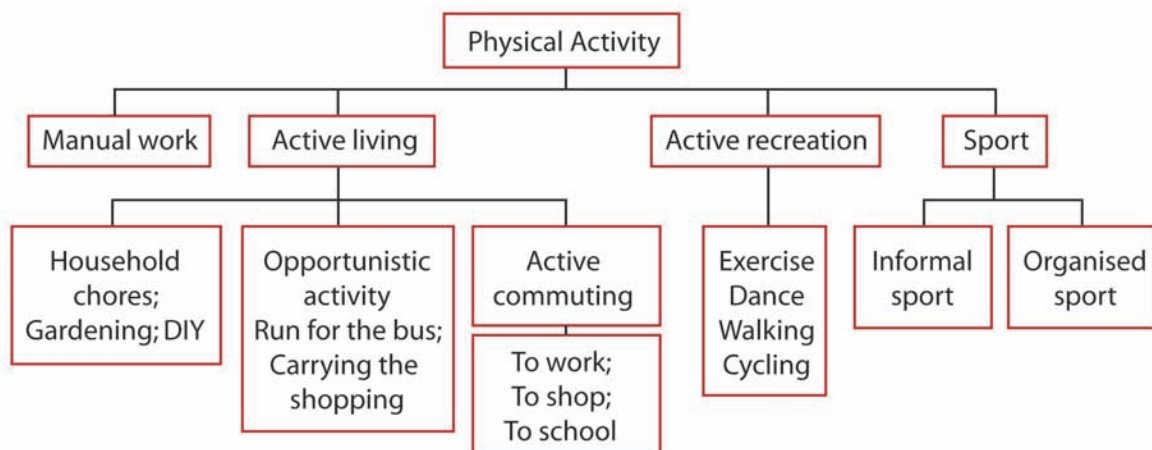


**1.4** Although increasing physical activity has many direct benefits for health, it can also have beneficial impacts in other major areas of government activity, such as the environment, society, transport and the economy. Such benefits include the creation of jobs in the sport and leisure industry, contribution to the rural economy from walking, the potential for reduced crime, delinquency and anti-social behaviour and reduced traffic congestion from increased walking and cycling.

## Levels of physical activity in Wales are low, but the Welsh Assembly Government has produced a strategy designed to increase participation

**1.5** The standard adopted by the World Health Organisation, and by most countries in the world, including all the UK countries, for the recommended amount of physical activity for adults is at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise five times a week (referred to in this report as the 5x30 target)<sup>8</sup>. Physical activity as defined in this way can take place in a wide spectrum of settings and activities (Figure 1), ranging from organised competitive sport through to informal everyday activities such as gardening and do-it-yourself.

**Figure 1: The physical activity spectrum**



Source: Sports Council for Wales

<sup>8</sup> A person who is doing moderate intensity activity is defined by the Department of Health as experiencing an increase in breathing rate; an increase in heart rate; and a feeling of increased warmth, possibly accompanied by sweating

**Figure 2: Percentage of adults taking part in physical activity 2002/2003 and 2004/2005**

Level of activity	2002/2003 %	2004/2005 %
5x30 minutes per week or more	30	34
30 minutes on 3 or 4 occasions per week	10	9
30 minutes on 1 or 2 occasions per week	16	13
Inactive*	44	45

\*Inactive' does not mean zero activity as people carrying out 25 minutes of physical activity five times a week would be classed in this category.

Source: Sports Council for Wales, *Adult Participation in Sport, 2006*

**1.6** Data for measuring adult physical activity levels in Wales is available from two sources: the Sports Council biennial Adult Participation Survey and the Assembly Government's ongoing Health Survey. The key elements of each survey are set out in [Appendix 6](#). Data from the Sports Council's survey, referred to in *Climbing Higher* and *Climbing Higher - next steps*, shows that only one third of adults in Wales were carrying out the recommended amount of physical activity in 2004/2005 ([Figure 2](#)). Nearly a half, 45 per cent, of adults were classed as being inactive. The Sports Council's data does show a slight improvement in recommended activity levels compared to 2002/2003, but there remains considerable scope for improvement in activity levels in Wales - particularly in view of Wales's relatively poor health.

**1.7** Within these national figures, there is some variation at the local level. For example, data from the Sports Council's Adult Participation Survey showed the proportion of adults meeting the 5x30 target in 2004/2005 ranged from only seven per cent in Neath

Port Talbot to 76 per cent in Gwynedd, with similarly wide variations in the proportion of adults taking no activity. However, according to data from the Assembly Government's Welsh Health Survey the variation was less marked<sup>9</sup>. Factors affecting levels of activity include access to a range of facilities, including the natural environment for outdoor activities - and socio-economic factors (including health and wellbeing, levels of unemployment, access to a range of facilities, wages and skills levels).

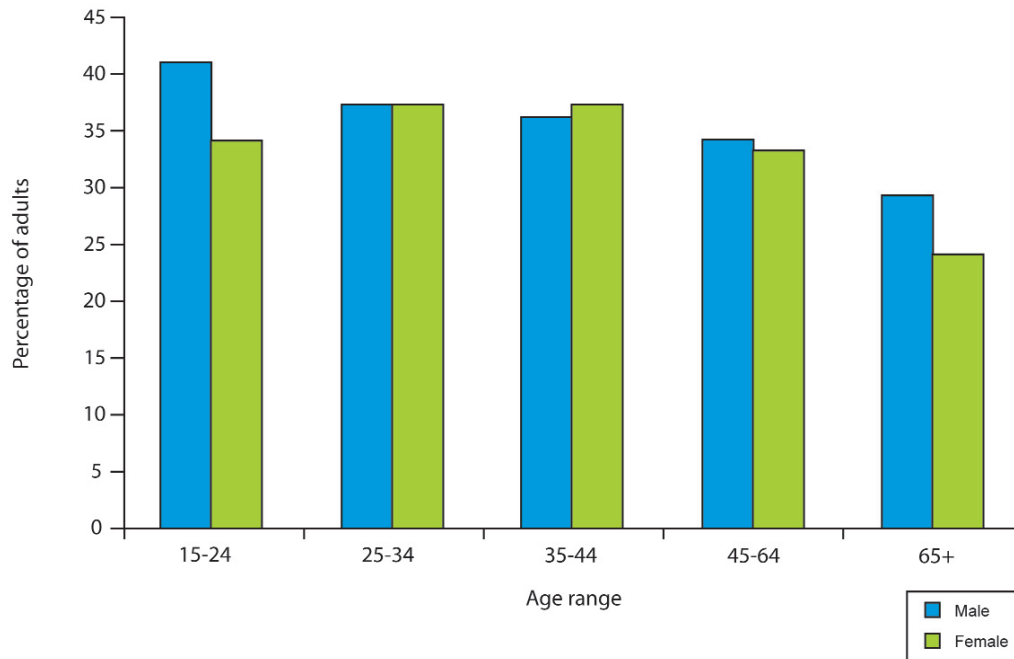
**1.8** Other variations in the level of physical activity amongst the population lie in age and gender. Participation in physical activity typically declines with age ([Figure 3](#)). Together with an increasing elderly population, this will place a greater burden on the NHS because of inactivity-related conditions and illnesses. Also, women tend to undertake less physical activity than men, with 32 per cent achieving the 5x30 target in Wales in 2004/2005, compared with 35 per cent for men (the respective figures for being inactive were 47 per cent and 43 per cent).

<sup>9</sup> For example, under the Welsh Health Survey, the proportion of adults meeting the 5x30 target ranges from 37 per cent in Ceredigion to 25 per cent in Wrexham and Rhondda Cynon Taff





**Figure 3: Percentage of adults carrying out recommended levels of physical activity (5x30) by age and gender in Wales 2004/2005**



Source: Sports Council for Wales

**1.9** It is widely recognised that the greatest public health benefits of increasing physical activity come from reducing the number of people living a sedentary lifestyle, that is, those who are inactive<sup>10</sup>. Figure 2 shows an increase of one per cent in those leading a sedentary lifestyle, with nearly 45 per cent of adults in Wales living a sedentary lifestyle in 2004/2005. In order for Wales as a nation to gain the full benefits from increasing physical activity, it is imperative that not only is there an increase in the percentage of people carrying out the recommended amounts of physical activity, but also a decrease in the sedentary population.

**1.10** Fostering positive attitudes towards physical activity amongst children and young people is likely to have a long-term positive impact when adulthood is reached. Recent reports of rising childhood obesity have highlighted the importance of increasing physical activity amongst children and young people. Research also suggests that it is highly probable that the origin of many chronic diseases lies in behaviours established in childhood<sup>11</sup>. The World Health Organisation recommend that children and young people undertake 60 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity at least five times a week (referred to as the 5x60 target).

<sup>10</sup> Framework for the Development of Sport and Physical Activity, Sports Council for Wales 2005; Let's make Scotland more Active, Scottish Executive, 2003  
<sup>11</sup> Tackling Childhood Obesity - First Steps, National Audit Office, Healthcare Commission and Audit Commission, 2006

**Figure 4: Percentage of children and young people carrying out 60 minutes of physical activity per day 2001-2004**

	% Children				% Young people			
	5 days +	3-4 days	1-2 days	0 days	5 days +	3-4 days	1-2 days	0 days
<b>2004</b>	41	25	22	12	24	24	28	24
<b>2002</b>	40	27	23	10	no data	no data	no data	no data
<b>2001</b>	no data	no data	no data	no data	28	26	30	16

**1.11** The Sports Council's survey on sport and physical activity for primary school children (ages 7-11) and young people (secondary school, ages 11-16), Active Young People in Wales<sup>12</sup>, found that the majority of children and young people are not carrying out the recommended levels of activity - **Figure 4**. Based on the data available, there were no significant changes in levels of activity between 2001 and 2004.

Among secondary school students, between 2001 and 2004 there was a reduction in the proportion carrying out the recommended levels of physical activity and an increase in those who were inactive.

**1.12** In January 2005, the Assembly Government published its strategy for sport and physical activity, Climbing Higher. It sets out the strategic direction in Wales for the next 20 years and aims to ensure that sport and physical activity is at the heart of Assembly Government policy. There are 16 targets in Climbing Higher, 11 of which relate to physical activity, listed at **Appendix 2** (four of the other

targets are for elite sport, and one relates to job creation). The first target is for adults in Wales in the next 20 years to 'match the best global standards for levels of sport and physical activity (in terms of the 5x30 target)', translated as 'an annual increase in overall adult physical activity levels of at least one percentage point per annum'. The second and third Climbing Higher targets set standards for younger people: that all children of primary school age and 90 per cent of secondary school pupils should participate in the recommended amounts of sport and physical activity - the 5x60 measure.

**1.13** In July 2006, the Assembly Government published Climbing Higher - next steps. The document details the areas that will be targeted for major investment in order to reach the targets set out in Climbing Higher. And in October 2006, the Assembly Government, in partnership with the Sports Council, launched a £7.6 million programme - '5x60' (see **Appendix 3**).

<sup>12</sup> Sports Council for Wales, 2006. The Sports Council also carry out biennial surveys of 22,000 children (age 7-11) and young people (age 11-16) in Wales. The latest participation data was collected in 2004 and reported on in 2006. Both the children's and young people's questionnaires ask how much exercise was carried in the previous week. Exercise is defined as any physical activity that left the participant feeling warm or at least slightly out of breath.



## There are significant challenges in changing peoples' behaviours to increase physical activity levels

**1.14** As an indication of the scale of the challenge facing the Assembly Government and its partners, the Sports Council has estimated that, in order to achieve the first Climbing Higher target of an increase in the number of adults carrying out the recommended 5x30 physical activity occasions, an additional 66 million occasions a year across Wales are required. If, for these purposes, all physical activity occasions were restricted to leisure centres, this would require around 70 additional facilities in Wales. The scale of the challenge, set against relatively static levels of physical activity, means that existing practices need to be challenged; and the Assembly

Government and its partners need to adopt a more radical approach, which for many of the organisations involved will require a significant change in culture.

**1.15** There are a number of potential reasons why physical activity levels are relatively low in Wales. Some of these barriers to greater activity can be dealt with through public policy, such as providing better-quality facilities, and improving access and transport links. These are commonly categorised as environmental factors. However, there are more complex personal behavioural and psychological barriers which are more difficult to overcome. These include issues such as economic activity and social class, education, health and lifestyle, work-life balance, attitude and family. These behavioural factors tend to lie beyond the sphere of direct public policy influence, and are therefore more difficult for policymakers to deal with. The issue is further

**Figure 5: Summary of barriers to increasing physical activity in Wales**

Behavioural/demand issues	Environmental/supply
Time/commitment	Facilities
Culture	Costs
Gender	Programming
Alternative activities	Transport
PE and school sport	Coaches: quality/quantity
Personal appearance	Lack of volunteers
Role models	Legal concerns
Family responsibilities	Competition structures
Parental attitudes	Financial support
Personal safety/abuse	Negative experiences

Source: Sports Council for Wales

complicated when environmental and behavioural barriers combine; for example when individuals' behaviour is determined by the social, cultural, economic and ecological environment in which they are based. The main environmental and behavioural factors are shown in [Figure 5](#).

- 1.16** Behavioural barriers are particularly significant in the context of the active living, as opposed to the sporting, end of the physical activity spectrum ([Figure 1](#)). And active living is the area where those who are sedentary are most likely to increase their levels of physical activity. Active living and adapting lifestyles through challenging behavioural barriers is a notoriously difficult area for policymakers and is the focus of the work of the Assembly Government's Health Improvement Division. A number of countries where physical activity levels have grown over a number years, such as Canada and Finland, have used social marketing techniques to overcome behavioural barriers ([Box 1](#)).
- 1.17** On the basis of evidence of the success of social marketing campaigns throughout the world, a report for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport recommended a campaign to promote the personal benefits of sport and physical activity: 'As a matter of urgency, (the department) create and manage a long-term marketing campaign which draws together the many disparate promotional activities, and endeavour to secure commercial partners'.
- 1.18** A 'one-size-fits-all' approach, which in some circumstances can be applied to environmental barriers, is less likely to succeed in trying to overcome behavioural barriers, for which a more individual approach may well be required. To increase levels of physical activity amongst some people may require specialist skills, such as dealing with health and social issues. The public sector in

### Box 1: Social marketing to increase levels of physical activity

Social marketing for health is defined by the National Social Marketing Centre (part of the National Consumer Council) as 'the systematic application of marketing concepts and techniques, to achieve specific behavioural goals, to improve health and reduce inequalities'. On the basis of evidence of the success of social marketing campaigns throughout the world, a report for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport recommended that to promote the personal benefits of sport and physical activity: 'As a matter of urgency, [the department] create and manage a long-term marketing campaign which draws together the many disparate promotional activities, and endeavour to secure commercial partners'.

Wales has developed a wide range of interventions aimed at overcoming barriers to participating in physical activity which are summarised in [Appendix 3](#). The interventions summarised are those directly designed to increase levels of physical activity across Wales, such as Dragon Sport, 5x60, and Free Swimming (see [Appendix 3](#)), and have been implemented at a local level. It does not include a large number of specific interventions which are co-ordinated and funded locally.

## The delivery chain for the provision of services aimed at increasing physical activity is complex

- 1.19** The complexity and cross-cutting nature of promoting and providing for increased physical activity requires the involvement of many organisations. This includes the public, private and voluntary sectors, and at national, regional and local levels. This is reflected in the number of policies, strategies, action plans, schemes and interventions which are in existence or planned (the relationship of these activities to the Assembly Government's



Climbing Higher strategy is considered in Part 2). Although necessary, the number of organisations involved in delivering physical activity opportunities increases the risk of delivery being inefficient and ineffective if the overall approach is uncoordinated. Figure 6 shows the number of organisations involved and the complexities of the delivery chain for two physical activity schemes, Free Swimming and Exercise Referral.

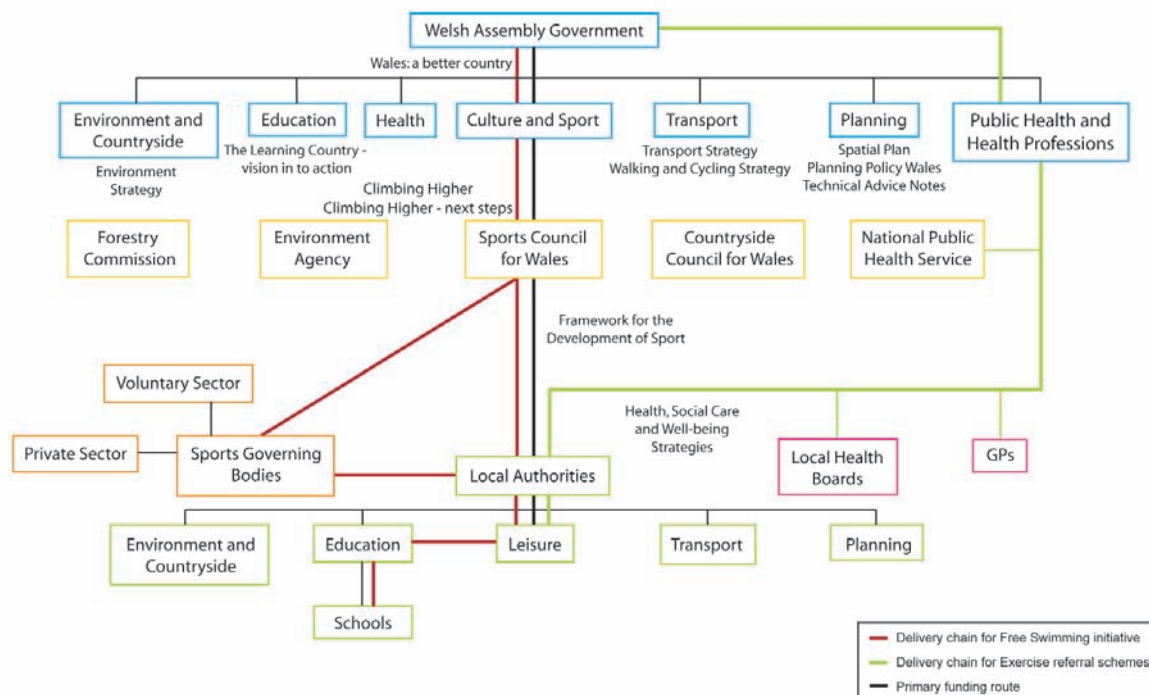
### Box 2: Delivery chain

A 'delivery chain' refers to the complex networks of organisations, including central and local government, Assembly Government Sponsored Public Bodies (AGSPBs) and organisations from the private and voluntary sectors that need to work together to achieve or deliver an improved public sector outcome or Assembly Government target.

**1.20** Within the Assembly Government, there are a number of departments with a part to play in increasing physical activity. Some of these naturally align with departments in local authorities, where policy is developed and implemented at a local level - see Figure 7. The Assembly Government's Sports Policy Unit, part of the Department for Local Government and Culture, led the

development of the Climbing Higher strategy. Given the strong links with health, the Assembly Government's Department for Health and Social Services, and the Public Health and Health Professions Department (formerly the Office of the Chief Medical Officer), also have an important part to play in the development and implementation of policy for increasing physical activity. Other Assembly Government departments and agencies such as the Forestry Commission

**Figure 6: Delivery chain for increasing physical activity in Wales**



Source: Wales Audit Office



**Figure 7: Responsibilities in Assembly Government and local authority departments for increasing physical activity**

Policy area	Assembly Government responsibility	Local authority responsibility
Culture (sport and leisure)	Development of sport and physical activity policy.	Sports development and management of leisure facilities.
Education	Development of physical education curriculum; management of Physical Education and School Sport (PESS) programme; development of children's policy including play.	Physical education lessons, school facilities and extra-curricular activities.
Environment and Countryside	Development of environmental policy and publication of the Environment strategy.	Maintenance of local environment.
Health and social services	Development of health policy including public health promotion and improvement.	Health promotion activities often undertaken in partnership with LHBs and the voluntary sector. Social services can promote physical activity with client group.
Planning	Development of planning policy which is instrumental in creating conditions and environments for physical activity to take place.	Development of Local Development Plans (LDPs) and planning decisions.
Transport	Development of transport policy including walking and cycling.	Local transport plans; development of cycle and walking paths.

Source: Wales Audit Office

have responsibilities which mainly relate to providing suitable environments in which sport and physical activity can be undertaken.

**1.21** Local government has a key role to play in increasing physical activity, and is acknowledged in Climbing Higher as 'a crucial partner of the Assembly Government in delivering this strategy'. Although there is no mandatory requirement for local authorities to provide sport and recreation services, the Local Government Acts of 1972 and 1976 gave authorities discretionary power to provide sport and recreation facilities and activities, and to provide financial support to voluntary organisations to make such provisions. As a result, local authorities are a major provider of sports and recreation facilities,

services and development opportunities, in recognition of the contribution that these services can make to health improvement, social inclusion, economic regeneration and crime reduction.

**1.22** The role of LHBs in increasing physical activity is less well defined. Most of their activity centres around preventative schemes and interventions, aimed at reducing the risks of illnesses associated with physical inactivity, such as coronary heart disease. Support and guidance for LHB activities relating to the promotion of physical activity is provided through the National Public Health Service (NPHS) for Wales, the organisation which has brought together all the public health resources of the five former health authorities in Wales. The NPHS set out its roles and





**Figure 8: Roles of other national public bodies for increasing physical activity**

Body	Role
Sports Council for Wales	The lead organisation in Wales with responsibility for developing and promoting sport and recreation, and for distributing lottery funds to sport in Wales. The Sports Council is the Assembly Government's specialist in sport and physical activity and 'advisory delivery agent' promoting the increase of physical activity throughout Wales.
NPHS	The NPHS brings together the public health resources of the five former health authorities in Wales. The NPHS's Framework for Action Physical Activity includes specifying the work to be delivered by NPHS staff in local public health teams in regard to physical activity and recommending activities to be delivered by partners. NPHS also has a role in developing, supporting and promoting the evidence of effectiveness of physical activity interventions.
Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)	The Assembly Government's statutory adviser on sustaining natural beauty, wildlife and the opportunity for outdoor enjoyment in Wales and its inshore waters. Countryside Council for Wales promotes access to the countryside whilst maintaining it; its 2005-2008 Corporate Plan makes a commitment to aligning with Climbing Higher and making a contribution to the health agenda through 'greater access to the countryside and coast for all of its people and visitors, giving enjoyment and wellbeing'.
Forestry Commission Wales	Forestry Commission Wales acts as the Assembly Government's Department of Forestry and directly as stewards of the 38 per cent of Welsh woodlands owned by the National Assembly for Wales (the National Assembly), a key facility for increasing physical activity.
Environment Agency Wales	The leading public body for protecting and improving the environment, the Environment Agency has a statutory duty to promote water-related sport and recreation on or near inland and coastal waters. The range of the agency's activities (which covers flood risk management, water resources and water quality, fisheries, conservation, air quality, waste, recreation and navigation) also impact on the ability of people to use the natural environment for physical activities.

Source: Sports Council for Wales; Climbing Higher - next steps, Welsh Assembly Government; Countryside Council for Wales Corporate Plan 2004-2008; Framework for Action Physical Activity (NPHS), 2005

responsibilities in its Framework for Action Physical Activity document. The NPHS and LHBs support activities such as the formulation of strategies, action plans and networks for physical activity; they are also able to add their specialist health expertise to supporting and evaluating interventions. One key area of work is the joint development of Health, Social Care and Wellbeing strategies with local authorities. These strategies set out how health and wellbeing will be improved in

each local area through needs assessment and prioritisation of issues, and are examined in Part 2 of the report.

**1.23** As well as national and local government, there are important roles for other national public bodies in increasing physical activity, summarised in Figure 8. The Sports Council is the principal agency for implementing the Assembly Government's policy for sport and physical activity in Wales. The work of other

AGSPBs, such as the CCW and the Environment Agency, has an indirect impact on increasing levels of physical activity by promoting participation in sport and physical activity using the natural environment.

**1.24** As in most policy areas, community, voluntary and charitable organisations have an important part to play in policy formulation and implementation and are potentially well placed to deliver because of their community links and specialist knowledge. Many voluntary sector organisations are involved in schemes and interventions for increasing physical activity both directly and indirectly. For example, Age Concern is involved in Walking the Way to Health schemes in Powys and Ceredigion. Also involved are national governing bodies of sport and physical recreation, such as the Welsh Badminton Association, which, as well as its principal role in promoting and achieving performance and excellence, also provides support for local clubs and associations and makes a significant contribution to providing opportunities to increase physical activity. Clubs, which are mainly run by volunteers,

can provide recreational or competitive opportunities to increase physical activity across ages and gender, whilst also providing the opportunity for social interaction. The private sector, for its part, contributes to increasing physical activity through the provision of non-subsidised facilities and sponsorship of teams, events and schemes (Case study 1).

## The primary aim in increasing physical activity in Wales is to improve health, but ownership, management and delivery of the Climbing Higher strategy is mainly limited to sports and leisure services

**1.25** Climbing Higher makes it clear that the main reason for seeking to increase physical activity is the potential benefits for health. However, in Wales, the agenda for increasing physical activity is being driven at the national level by the Assembly Government's Sports

### Case study 1: The private sector makes various contributions to increasing physical activity and achieving Climbing Higher targets

#### JJB Fitness Centre - Merthyr

JJB Sports is one of the UK's largest sports and leisure retailers. In the last few years it has expanded its services to include a chain of fitness clubs, the majority of which are adjacent to their superstores. One such facility is on the Cyfarthfa Retail Park, Merthyr. Even though it is in one of the most deprived areas in Wales, there are over 4,500 members, 2,600 of whom applied before the facility was opened. The facility provides state-of-the-art facilities and charges £36 per month for full membership, only £4 more than the local authority leisure centre at Rhyd-y-Car. The manager was subsequently appointed as Vice Chairman of the Merthyr Active Living Forum providing important private sector representation on the group.

#### Sainsbury's - Active Kids

The Sainsbury's Active Kids scheme is now in its third year of operation and has already supplied more than the £34 million of sports equipment and coaching sessions to more than 26,000 schools throughout the UK. Schools have to register to take part in the scheme. Under the scheme, shoppers receive one voucher for every £10 spent in store or online, and bonus vouchers on fresh fruit and vegetables and products featuring the healthy apple symbol. Vouchers are handed to schools, Scout or Guide groups, who can then redeem them for a wide range of sports equipment, kit and coaching sessions, as well as cookery equipment to encourage healthy eating within schools.



Policy Unit, part of the Department for Local Government and Culture. Alongside this, the Health Improvement Division takes responsibility for some aspects of physical activity including the Food and Fitness Implementation Plan, the Healthy Ageing Action Plan, the Mental Health Promotion Action Plan and the corporate health standard. During the development of Climbing Higher, an official from the Public Health Improvement Division was seconded to the Sports Policy Unit with the primary aims of facilitating joint working between the divisions and the development of the action plan. However, delays in the development of Climbing Higher - next steps meant that the document was developed by officials from the Sports Policy Unit only. There was liaison between the two units, but the working group set up to oversee the development of Climbing Higher has not met since November 2004.

- 1.26** Similarly, at the local level, management and delivery of efforts to increase physical activity is mainly restricted to sports and leisure services. The risk is that associating physical activity so closely with sport in this way might deter people who have no interest in sport from taking part in physical activity. It may also fail to gain the necessary support and investment from other agencies and organisations that have an important role to play in increasing physical activity in Wales, such as LHBs, and certain Assembly Government and local authority departments.
- 1.27** The World Health Organisation in its report *Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health*<sup>13</sup> states that health ministries have an essential responsibility for co-ordinating and facilitating the contributions of other ministries



and government agencies. It also states that ministries of health should take the lead in formulating partnerships with key agencies, and public and private stakeholders in order to draw up jointly a common agenda and work plan aimed at promoting physical activity.

- 1.28** Two countries with a good record in increasing levels of physical activity are Finland and Canada. In Finland the lead has been taken by the Ministry of Health, and in Canada by the Physical Activity Unit of Canada's Public Health Agency, in both cases in collaboration with other sectors. Within the UK, Scotland provides an example of the lead on physical activity being taken by the health sector - see [Case Study 2](#). Although it is too early to assess whether the approach taken by Scotland has been successful, it does illustrate a different route to tackling the issue.

<sup>13</sup> The World Health Organisation's 57th World Health Assembly

## Case Study 2: Scotland has adopted an integrated approach to improve physical activity led by the health sector

In order to increase levels of physical activity in Scotland, the Scottish Executive published a strategy, Let's Make Scotland More Active, in 2003. Like Climbing Higher, the document recognised the potential contribution of physical activity not only to improve health, but also to support the delivery of major social, economic, environmental and community policies.

The Scottish Executive recognised that there was no department, organisation or agency with a clear duty for taking the Strategy forward and that physical activity has been 'everyones and no-ones responsibility' and that a clear framework for co-ordinating work needed to be developed as a matter of urgency at both national and local levels. To deal with the lack of co-ordination, the Strategy recommended the creation of a permanent National Physical Activity Co-ordinator post, and the setting up of a national Physical Activity Co-ordination Group with members from a range of departments and national agencies. The group should also include senior representatives who are able to make decisions about how resources are deployed and how the strategy is put in to practice.

The National Physical Activity Co-ordinator, has been in post for the last four years and is based in the Scottish Executive's Health Department. The post aims to co-ordinate activity across departments and ensure physical activity is a material consideration in all relevant policy areas. The role of co-ordinator also includes identifying how the Executive can work with and support all of the agencies, groups and organisations that help increase activity levels. Implementation of the Physical Activity Strategy is also supported by the National Health Improvement Agency. It has a number of posts dedicated to physical activity including a Public Health Advisor (responsible for evidence appraisal and production), a Programme Manager (responsible for developing and leading physical activity related programmes), a Physical Activity Alliance Co-ordinator (a new initiative designed to encourage the sharing of good practice and evidence), a Learning and Development Advisor (responsible for implementing the National Physical Activity Workforce Development Plan; the first of its kind in the world) and a National Development Officer based within Scottish Health promoting the Schools Unit. The Co-ordinator also supports the work of the National Physical Activity Council. The Council is set up to:

- offer advice to the Executive on the implementation of the National Physical Activity Strategy (2003);
- provide a forum for the development of new thinking;
- have a Scotland-wide remit to gather, analyse and provide advice;
- undertake or commission (via the Secretariat) work on topics of particular concern or specific relevance to Scotland;
- advise on information and research needs; and
- advise on a wide range of policies which will reduce the health impact of physical inactivity.

The Council was initially formed for a two-year period. This period has now passed and as such the remit of the Council is currently being reviewed.





## Part 2 - Many organisations' strategies and actions are not sufficiently co-ordinated to maximise their impact on increasing physical activity across Wales

### The Welsh Assembly Government and its sponsored bodies' strategies and action plans are not sufficiently aligned with each other, nor with Climbing Higher

#### The Welsh Assembly Government and its sponsored public bodies

- 2.1** At the heart of the Assembly Government's aim to increase physical activity is Climbing Higher, its strategy for sport and physical activity (Paragraph 1.12 and [Appendix 2](#)). As a cross-cutting issue, where a number of policy areas have important roles to play, it is essential that all relevant Assembly Government strategies, and those of its sponsored bodies, are aligned with Climbing Higher. For example, the main target of Climbing Higher, to match the best standards for levels of sport and physical activity in the next 20 years, requires the involvement of departments with responsibility for health, sport, transport, environment, planning and education.
- 2.2** We reviewed a number of Assembly Government and AGSPB policies and strategies which are relevant to the achievement of Climbing Higher targets. [Figure 9](#) summarises our analysis of the extent to which these policies and strategies relate to Climbing Higher, and the extent to which Climbing Higher takes account of other



policy areas. While some progress has been made by a number of bodies in aligning their strategies, we also found a number of deficiencies.

- 2.3** Whilst physical activity is high up on the sport and leisure policy agenda, the links with other policy areas need to be strengthened and the contribution that transport, planning, play, environment and countryside can make to achieving Climbing Higher targets needs wider recognition by those developing and implementing relevant policies. For example, play is seen as an important element in increasing physical activity amongst children; and Climbing Higher states that play is to be encouraged as an essential component for healthy development and a foundation for physical literacy<sup>14</sup>. However, the Assembly Government's Play Policy Implementation Plan, published in February 2006, makes no mention of Climbing Higher and the potential

<sup>14</sup> Physical literacy is a term used to imply competency in the full range of fundamental movement skills that underpin subsequent acquisition and development of more specific sports and life skills.

**Figure 9: Climbing Higher and Climbing Higher - next steps consideration of other policy areas impacting on increasing physical activity**

Policy area	Policy or other policy area document mention of physical activity, Climbing Higher and its targets	Climbing Higher	Climbing Higher - next steps
Education	<i>The Learning Country: Vision in to Action</i> - no mention of Climbing Higher, but reference to the Assembly Government's Food and Fitness Working Group and Welsh Network of Healthy School Scheme.	Climbing Higher targets to be met by ensuring that, in the process of personal development, the acquisition of physical literacy is as important as the development of literacy and numeracy skills. The role that schools have to play in curricular and extra-curricular sport and physical activity cannot be overstated.	Implementation of Secondary School Sport programme and Dragon Sport.
Environment and Countryside	<i>Environment Strategy</i> - links made to relevant Climbing Higher targets such as use of natural environment for outdoor activities.	Climbing Higher targets to be met by increasing participation in sustainable ways that ensures that the quality natural environment is maintained and enhanced.	Further work will take place through specialist outdoor environment agencies to ensure their action plans support Climbing Higher targets.
Health	<i>Food and Fitness Implementation Plan</i> - mentions Climbing Higher, but no reference to how actions contribute to its targets. <i>Healthy Ageing Action Plan</i> - should be 'read in conjunction with other complementary documents aimed at the whole population' including Climbing Higher. No reference to Climbing Higher targets.	The 'essence of the strategy is to maximise the contribution that sport and physical activity make to wellbeing in Wales'. Improving health and wellbeing is at the centre of the strategy.	The health services and networks have an important contribution as the lead sector for working with, reaching and promoting positive physical activity messages to those people who are most at risk from poor health.
Planning	Wales Spatial Plan, Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note (TAN) 16 were produced before Climbing Higher published. TAN 16 is to be updated to provide new guidance reflecting greater attention to sport and recreation open space and creating better living environments.	Climbing Higher targets to be met by ensuring planning processes and transport policies that support this strategy.	The outcome of planning action should be focused on encouraging increases in levels of physical activity through the development of more appropriate and local community-based resources and developments and enhanced access. Developments should actively encourage physical activity.
Play	Play Policy published prior to Climbing Higher Play Policy Implementation Plan - published a year after Climbing Higher but does not mention it.	Climbing Higher targets to be met by encouraging play as an essential component for healthy development and a foundation for physical literacy.	Play Policy Implementation Plan supports the case backed up by evidence that children need regular opportunities for outdoor play in order to maintain healthy levels of physical activity.
Transport	Walking and Cycling Strategy published prior to Climbing Higher. Connecting Wales published in 2006 with no mention of Climbing Higher.	Climbing Higher targets to be met by encouraging the integration of walking and cycling into everyday life, both as a means of transport and as active recreation.	Building on the Assembly Government's Walking and Cycling strategy, supporting schemes such as safe routes to schools and supporting the Sustainable Travel Agenda and encouraging people to choose alternative transport options.

Source: Wales Audit Office and Welsh Assembly Government





contribution of play. Similarly, transport policy can contribute to encouraging walking (the most popular sport/activity in Wales<sup>15</sup>) and cycling. The Assembly Government's transport strategy consultation document, *Connecting Wales*, published in July 2006, does not specifically mention Climbing Higher, although the contribution Transport Policy can make to achieving Climbing Higher targets is outlined through one of the 15 desired outcomes of the transport policy, 'Encouraging Healthy Lifestyles'. The Assembly Government told us that officials from sport and health contributed to the development of a new walking and cycling strategy for Wales. This is likely to be published after the new transport strategy and will refer to Climbing Higher targets.

- 2.4** Climbing Higher itself only makes a partial mention of how other policy areas can contribute to increasing physical activity. However, *Climbing Higher - next steps* (Paragraph 1.13) does set out in greater detail the policies and plans from a number of areas across government where more is being done to focus future initiatives on developing active lifestyles. However, at present there are no plans as to how departments and sponsored bodies will co-ordinate and report on the various activities that can contribute to increasing physical activity, along with local partners. The lack of responsibility for managing the delivery chain for increasing physical activity presents a risk to Climbing Higher targets being achieved efficiently and effectively. It is now important that the Assembly Government ensures engagement between all relevant policy areas and the relevant sponsored bodies to take actions forward and to feed outcomes from programmes into Climbing Higher evaluation.

### Box 3: Sports Council Development Menu

The Sports Council is formulating a development menu from which local partnerships can select appropriate interventions which will need to be implemented through local agreements such as community plans and health, social care and wellbeing strategies.

The key priorities of the development menu are:

- targeting young people to influence lifelong habits and bring about a cultural shift;
- reducing the number of sedentary adults;
- increasing frequency of adult participation; and
- targeting low participation areas and sedentary communities.

### The Sports Council

- 2.5** The Sports Council's Framework for the Development of Sport, published in 2005, is a direct response to Climbing Higher. Rather than setting out how it will seek to deliver on each of the individual Climbing Higher targets, the Sports Council sets out to increase participation levels overall through marketing of physical activity, advocacy for sport and innovation in programme development. This move, supported by its Corporate Plan for 2005-2007, represents a significant shift in focus for the Sports Council from grants management to encouraging and developing opportunities for sport and physical activity. The Sports Council's approach now centres on supporting people through training and supporting organisations with development and evaluation of good practice. These 'development options' will be delivered through a series of interventions in programmes such as Active Young People and Active Communities (Box 3).
- 2.6** Although the document was discussed at meetings of Chief Officers of Recreation and Leisure, a number of local authorities and national sport governing bodies told us that they were still uncertain of the role of the Sports Council and would have welcomed the

<sup>15</sup> Adult Sports Participation and Club Membership in Wales 2002/2003 Sports Council for Wales 2005

## Case study 3: Welsh Rugby Union - Penderry Community Coaches and Rugbywise Social Inclusion Projects

This scheme aimed to increase physical activity, community involvement and promote positive behaviour for children and young people through the medium of rugby in the Penderry ward of Swansea, the eighth most deprived area of Wales.

The programme of activities was based on the lack of variety of sports within the ward and attracted nearly 4,500 participants. Outside football and martial arts, there was no opportunity for local children and young people to participate in sport or physical activity in a club setting within their own community. The Community Coaches and Rugbywise scheme offered 52 hours of new activity within local community facilities each week in a range of sports (athletics, badminton, basketball, dance aerobics, netball, rugby, swimming and tennis). The scheme also offered opportunities for youths and adults to access a variety of accredited courses in sport and related disciplines including the opportunity to gain accreditation from the Welsh Rugby Union. In all, the scheme resulted in 560 qualifications being gained by trainees and coaches.

An important part of the scheme was social inclusion and community development, highlighted by the support of South Wales Police and Swansea Youth Offending Team. The scheme provides a number of examples where children and young people with social problems have benefited from participating in sport and recreation. Data suggests the scheme has contributed to reduced levels of youth annoyance and incidents reported during the period in which the scheme was operating.

opportunity to have been formally consulted on the Sports Council's Framework for the Development of Sport document. The main areas of uncertainty were around roles and responsibilities, and the risk of duplication with the work to be carried out by local authorities in terms of developing partnerships, advocacy and interventions.

- 2.7 The Sports Council has an important task in defining and supporting the role of sports governing bodies. The nature of the current sports club system is such that those who do not have the talent to become elite sportspeople may receive less attention from coaches. The message that there are other good reasons to continue taking part in the sport, such as health and social interaction, is not one that has traditionally been spread by governing bodies. Whilst they continue to develop talent, these organisations are in a prime position to contribute to the physical activity agenda because of their expertise in certain sports and their links with clubs. However, according to the Welsh Sports Association, at this point in time, the majority

of governing bodies do not have the structures or resources to widen their remit to promote physical activity for health benefits. However, **Case Study 3** provides an example of a larger governing body supporting a project with a broader objective than sports development.

## In the main, local authorities' and Local Health Boards' strategies are not aligned with Climbing Higher

- 2.8 It is also important that the policies and strategies of local bodies and organisations are aligned with Climbing Higher. As shown in Part 1, local authorities and LHBs have a vital role in local policy development and the delivery of interventions. Our analysis found that although the main strategies and plans for increasing physical activity were not yet consistently aligned to Climbing Higher, the majority of bodies and organisations were seeking to respond to it.



## Local authorities

**2.9** The 22 local authorities in Wales are key delivery agencies for increasing physical activity. Not only do they provide front-line sport and leisure services, they are also planning authorities and they develop and implement local transport and environmental policy which can impact on increasing physical activity. According to our survey, seven local authorities have developed stand-alone physical activity strategies and nine have outlined their approach through their leisure strategy (Figure 10). Eleven local authorities specifically developed their strategies to complement Climbing Higher. In most other cases, strategies were developed before Climbing Higher was published. A number of authorities reported that they were waiting for the Assembly Government to publish its Climbing Higher action plan before updating their physical activity strategies.

**Figure 10: Strategic approaches to physical activity in Welsh local authorities**

	Number of authorities
Part of leisure strategy	9
Stand-alone strategy	7
Part of other strategy*	4
None	2

\*eg, culture; health etc

Source: Wales Audit Office

**2.10** We found that the stand-alone strategies were generally more successful in reflecting the cross-cutting nature of physical activity, with clear links to other strategies and an understanding of how physical activity supports wider objectives. Those authorities that produced stand-alone strategies did so through consultation with a range of other local authority departments, such as education, planning and transport; and by making links to other related activity, such as nutrition. Across all authorities, however, consultation of this sort was limited - see Figure 11; only four local authorities stated that they consulted with all the named departments.

**2.11** Local authorities' community strategies are important documents which provide a vision of how the local authority and their partners will develop the community in the next 10 to 15 years. The majority of strategies were published prior to Climbing Higher, with only four, Blaenau Gwent (Case Study 4), Ceredigion, Newport and Torfaen, published afterwards. Of these four, only Blaenau Gwent's makes specific mention of Climbing Higher, as one of the key strategies to take in to consideration. However, without reference to Climbing Higher, Cardiff set a target in its strategy to increase adult participation in physical activity by one per cent per year to April 2005 and two per cent per year from 2005-2008, a more ambitious target than the equivalent in Climbing Higher.

**2.12** A number of other authorities' community strategies make a passing mention of increasing physical activity as part of an overall strategy to improve health and wellbeing, but do not recognise it as an important strategic issue. And while the Assembly Government has encouraged local authorities to set up partnerships to deliver

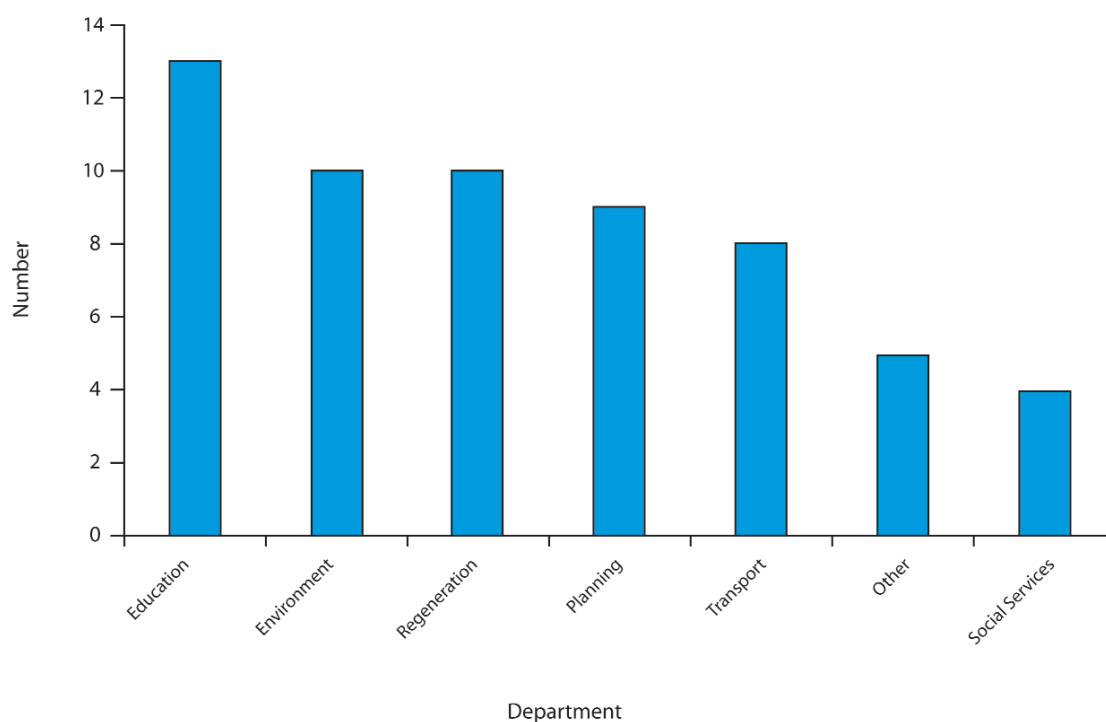
## Case study 4: Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has aligned its Physical Activity Strategy to Climbing Higher

As well as being one of the most deprived areas of Wales, the population of Blaenau Gwent is also one of the least active. The Council has proactively been looking to increase levels of physical activity since it published its Sport and Recreation Strategy in 2000.

The primary focus of the strategy was to invest in ageing facilities. The Council invested more than £10 million over five years, with funding mainly provided by Sports Lottery funding via the Sports Council. One major development was Abertillery Sports Centre, a dual-use facility which includes sports facilities used by the adjoining school, the public and a day care centre for the elderly.

Having made a substantial investment in facilities, the Council has moved on to focus on health and wellbeing and in particular, physical activity. The Council published Sport and Active Living, its strategy for increasing physical activity, in January 2006, with an emphasis on improving health through changing lifestyles and sport and aligning to Climbing Higher aspirations. In keeping with this shift, and in response to its Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Strategy, the Council has developed a partnership with the LHB which will result in a joint commissioning structure to deliver physical activity and other services. This is facilitated by a change in the political structure which means that Leisure Services falls within a Healthy Living portfolio.

**Figure 11: Number of the 22 local authorities reporting that they consulted with other departments in the development of their Physical Activity Strategy**



Source: Wales Audit Office





community strategies, only three, Anglesey, Blaenau Gwent and the Vale of Glamorgan, mention the Sports Council as being a key partner in the delivery of their strategy.

**2.13** Physical activity is, to a large extent, still managed as a sports issue (Paragraph 1.26). However, we found that most progress was being made in driving the agenda forward when a more integrated, cross-cutting approach was in place, involving an effective partnership with the LHB and open dialogue and involvement from other local authority departments. For example, Swansea Council's Sports Development Unit has been integrated with health and new officers have been placed within the team and the department now consists of sports development, health and parks. But the barriers to effective cross-departmental working in local authorities should not be underestimated - as Sir Jeremy Beecham observed in his review of public services in Wales when he said that 'leaders, organisers and departments...are silo based. Vertical lines of policy and performance management reinforce this culture'<sup>16</sup>.

**2.14** As is the case elsewhere, the move away from sport to embrace all forms of physical activity has resulted in some confusion about responsibilities. The South East Wales Sports Development Forum surveyed local authority sports development divisions in 2005, to assess their readiness to meet Climbing Higher targets. One of the main issues which arose was a lack of clarity amongst sports development staff as to 'what we are and what we do'. There was a feeling that there was a major diversification in the role and it needed to be clarified.



### Local health boards

**2.15** Our survey of LHBs asked who had responsibility for increasing physical activity in their local area. The majority answered that there was joint responsibility between themselves and local authorities. We also asked whether the LHBs had a strategy for increasing physical activity, and all responded that they had (with the exception of Anglesey who were in the process of developing it). Seventeen of the LHBs stated that this was in the form of a Health, Social Care and Wellbeing strategy.

**2.16** We reviewed local Health, Social Care and Wellbeing strategies to determine whether increasing physical activity was considered as being an important issue in improving the health and wellbeing of the local population. In general, we found that, whilst most mentioned physical activity, it did not have a high prominence. In the majority of cases, references merely amounted to recognising the need to increase physical activity. Some of the strategies described the

<sup>16</sup> *Beyond Boundaries: Citizen-Centred Local Services for Wales*, Report to the Welsh Assembly Government, June 2006

interventions currently in place and, in a very few cases, set targets. In addition, only a few strategies mentioned key target groups, such as the disadvantaged.

- 2.17** Local health boards told us that the paucity of detail on some issues was because these documents were required within the relatively short timescale of eight months and the underpinning evidence to support the strategies was of insufficient quality. Although the attention paid to physical activity is generally relatively weak, the strategies (according to the Assembly Government) should 'provide the strategic context within which more detailed service delivery and operational plans will be taken forward by all partners'. Our survey of LHBs found that in the majority of cases this was being done through local partnerships - discussed further at paragraphs 2.30-2.31.
- 2.18** Existing Health, Social Care and Wellbeing strategies are underpinned by needs assessments and are operational for three years in the first instance from 2005-2008. Thereafter, the intention is that strategies will be operational for five years. With a few notable exceptions (such as Wrexham), the needs assessments for the current strategies pay little attention to physical inactivity and its related chronic conditions. However, the Assembly Government is planning to issue further guidance to all local authorities on how to develop physical activity strategies and action plans in support of these new Health Social Care and Wellbeing strategies.

## **The lack of co-ordinated action planning, to give effect to Climbing Higher, is a barrier to the effective and efficient delivery of actions designed to increase physical activity**

- 2.19** As set out earlier in this report, achieving the Climbing Higher targets requires a number of organisations, at both national and local level, to work together effectively, based on a common, shared understanding. However, while Climbing Higher sets out the aspirations of the Assembly Government and its partners, there is a lack of detail on the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for its delivery. In a complex, cross-cutting area such as increasing physical activity, there is therefore the risk that uncoordinated action and a lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities will lead to ineffective and inefficient delivery. Our wide-ranging review of the actions being taken across Wales to promote an increase in physical activity found that while there are pockets of good practice in taking an integrated and co-ordinated approach, mainly at the local level, there are also examples of poor co-ordination, ineffectiveness and inefficiency. These examples were mainly at the national level where there is no overall co-ordinated approach to the delivery of Climbing Higher. For example, our analysis of the Free Swimming initiative (**Box 4**) found that delivery was only effective where capacity is strong.





#### Box 4: Free Swimming initiative

Free Swimming is an initiative with two separate and distinct schemes. The pilot initiative provides free swimming to children and young people aged 16 and under with the aim of increasing participation levels in sport and physical activity with swimming being used as a catalyst. The older people's scheme for people aged 60 and over is aimed at providing health and social benefits to older people. The initiative, which began in 2003, runs across all local authorities and is funded by the Assembly Government - £5 million a year and administered by the Sports Council.

**2.20** Our assessment of the scheme, using a Self Assessment Tool developed by the National Audit Office and Audit Commission<sup>17</sup>, set out in full at [Appendix 4](#), found that in terms of co-ordination:

- there are no targets at a national or local level;
- the evidence basis for the scheme is very thin;
- there is no performance management framework in place;
- provision of funding is not linked to performance; and
- during the first three years of the scheme there has been no named individual with overall responsibility for the scheme.

On the Self Assessment Tool's 24-point scale (ranging from -12 to +12), we assessed the Free Swimming initiative as -2, where 'delivery may be effective in some parts of the delivery chain but only where capacity is strong'.

**2.21** The Assembly Government told us that the initiative, despite the fact that it has been running for three years, is still a national pilot designed to investigate whether the free entitlement can increase participation levels. In 2006 management of the scheme passed from the Assembly Government to the Sports Council which intends to address some of the acknowledged deficiencies of the initiative, such as its evaluation (Paragraph 3.16). The Assembly Government also pointed to the positive way in which a number of local authorities had responded to the scheme. For example:

- Bridgend offer a range of other free water-based activities including snorkelling, water polo and canoeing;
- Conwy have widened free provision to other sports and leisure activities during school holidays through its Ffit Kidz Free Sport initiative; and
- Newport offer children with a free swim card a discount on a range of other activities.

**2.22** One of the main reasons for both the fact that other relevant strategies tend not be aligned with Climbing Higher, and the often uncoordinated approach we found on the ground, is the absence of an effective action plan to accompany Climbing Higher. Although the Assembly Government published Climbing Higher - next steps in July 2006, 18 months after the publication of Climbing Higher, it is not an action plan. Instead, it outlines how additional funding of £15.6 million will be spent over the next two years and 'the planned investment in other portfolios that will contribute to the strategy'. While the document usefully recognises the importance in changes of perceptions of

<sup>17</sup> Delivering Efficiently: Strengthening the links in public service delivery chains, Audit Commission and National Audit Office, 2006



physical activity, and the need for a culture change by the public and providers of opportunities to develop an 'active-for-life' physical activity culture, it does not provide firmer details on who should do what. Local authorities expressed frustration at the time lag of around 18 months between the publication of Climbing Higher and Climbing Higher - next steps. They also made the point that they would have welcomed more detail on the expectations of local authorities in delivering Climbing Higher.

**2.23** Although Climbing Higher - next steps lacks detail on how a number of important issues such as accountability and roles and responsibilities are to be addressed, the Assembly Government is planning to produce a detailed integrated action plan in the second half of 2007. According to the Assembly Government, this action plan will clarify roles and responsibilities in terms of delivering Climbing Higher targets and provide details on monitoring and evaluation.

## Short-term funding can militate against longer-term approaches that are needed to change behaviours

**2.24** Not only are there a large number of interventions being delivered aimed at increasing physical activity ([Appendix 3](#)), but they are funded from a number of different sources. These include:

- Big Lottery Fund;
- CCW;
- Local authorities;
- LHB's;
- The private sector;
- Sports Council - (eg, Dragon Sport);
- Voluntary sector (eg, British Heart Foundation); and
- Assembly Government - (eg, Free Swimming, Communities First, Cymorth, Inequalities in Health Fund).

**2.25** Funding provided for many specific initiatives is relatively short-term in nature when compared to Climbing Higher's 20-year horizon, usually between three and five years. Newport LHB told us that a great deal of time is spent by officers in chasing monies from different sources which often require different monitoring and reporting systems and can be time-consuming in terms of administration. Whilst short-term funding does allow for regular review and evaluation to assess the effectiveness of interventions, and is likely because of political cycles, it does present a number of problems for organisations running schemes including the following issues:



- Short-term funding hinders long-term planning. Uncertainty that the scheme will still be in operation after the initial funding period leaves recipients to find other sources of funding to sustain the project, and if additional funding cannot be sourced, schemes have to close or reduce in scope.
- Where smaller short-term pots of funding are the only sources of funding available, some local authorities told us that they feel obliged to bid for them, whether or not they fitted with the authority's strategic priorities.
- Most of the funding sources are for specific projects (eg, Free Swimming) where there is limited scope for using initiative for schemes to meet the needs of the local area. Local authorities reported that they would welcome more freedom in what to do with these additional resources.

**2.26** We also found that organisations found difficulty in regard to staffing short-term projects. Even where recruiting staff was not an issue, staff can lose morale and start looking for other positions if the funding is not guaranteed to continue the project after the initial period of funding. A report published in July 2006 by the Bevan Foundation<sup>18</sup> came to three conclusions regarding the funding of increasing physical activity schemes:

- there needs to be a significant cultural change towards becoming a more physically-active population - this will be difficult to achieve with inadequate funding and short-term planning;
- increasing physical activity is still not given the high priority it deserves; and

### Case study 5: The Canadian government's funding mechanism for physical activity schemes allows for innovation and flexibility

The overarching strategy for increasing physical activity in Canada is the integrated pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy which is aimed at promoting health and preventing disease and injury. Phase 1 of the strategy focuses on physical activity, healthy eating and their relationship to healthy weights.

The strategy provides funding based on an open call for proposals for projects which involve collaboration between governments, non-government organisations, other agencies and the voluntary sector to reduce barriers and increase access to convenient, safe, affordable, and innovative opportunities to integrate physical activity into daily living. The only stipulation for funding requires that projects are of a national scope, they link to the strategic directions of the Healthy Living Strategy, they involve partnerships, and have physical activity as a central component.

- Health Service spending is disproportionately directed towards health services and treatment rather than prevention.

**2.27** An alternative approach is to enable those trying to access funding to bid to fund locally-designed projects from a pot of money (Case Study 5) rather than bidding for funding for externally-designed schemes. Climbing Higher - next steps lists more than 41 separate funding streams for increasing physical activity in Wales. Not only would a pot of money allow for local needs to be fully taken in to consideration, but it might also encourage innovation. However, a balance needs to be struck to ensure that local projects are aligned with national priorities and that methods and evaluation are consistent. For example, there are currently a number of exercise or GP referral schemes in Wales (Appendix 3). These schemes seek to enable people with health problems, or who

<sup>18</sup> The Bevan Foundation is a thinktank based in Tredegar, South Wales. Its report, Active Lives, found that there was a strong relationship between social and economic deprivation and people's health in three South Wales areas (Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Torfaen).

are at significant risk of disease, with support in becoming more active. At present schemes are funded, run and evaluated differently across local authorities in Wales. This makes determining which system works best a complex task. The Assembly Government is in the process of developing a new national Exercise Referral programme to bring as many of these schemes together with central funding.

## Partnership working is key to success, but is currently very patchy

- 2.28** Increasing physical activity across Wales involves many departments and agencies working towards a common target, numerous funding streams, and a wide variety of schemes in operation at local and national level; effective partnership working at all levels of the delivery chain is therefore essential. Partnership working can bring together various schemes, facilitate the sharing of best practice and expertise, and ensure that any gaps or duplication in delivery are identified.
- 2.29** Before *Climbing Higher* was published, the Assembly Government established a Climbing Higher - Sport and Physical Activity Working Group. The group was made up of Assembly Government officials from a number of departments including Sports Policy Unit, Health Improvement Division, Environment and Education and was jointly chaired by the Head of Local Government and the Chief Medical Officer. The group was tasked with overseeing the development of *Climbing Higher* and its publication. However, the group has not met since November 2004 and was not involved in the development of *Climbing Higher* - next steps.

**2.30** At the local level, where nearly all schemes and interventions to increase physical activity take place, our survey found that most local authority areas have partnerships in existence, but that the majority of them are specific to individual schemes. These schemes are therefore working in isolation, with no vehicle to bring them together with other schemes and with other key stakeholders. Even though guidance<sup>19</sup> on the establishment of physical activity partnerships was issued by the Assembly Government, we found that only 11 physical activity networks or partnerships are in operation, some of which have come in to existence as sub-groups of local health alliances. We also found that very few of these groups include officials from outside the health, sport and leisure divisions, such as transport, planning and environment, despite recommendations to the contrary in the Assembly Government's guidance.

**2.31** A number of local authorities and LHBs which have set up physical activity forums and action groups told us that they were unable to make significant progress because of the absence of an Assembly Government action plan for *Climbing Higher* to set out roles and responsibilities. In order to link local partnerships together, the Assembly Government has funded the setting up of the Physical Activity Network Wales. The network will be based around the development of a website and will aim to facilitate partnership working and provide information for professionals involved in physical activity, a summary of good practice, education and training resources and details on projects. It also aims to help identify training and professional development requirements through a training needs analysis.

<sup>19</sup> *Developing a Physical Activity Action Plan*, Welsh Assembly Government, 2005





## Case study 6: Mentro Allan is a scheme designed to increase physical activity amongst hard to reach groups

Mentro Allan is a Big Lottery Fund programme managed by a national partnership comprising CCW, NPHS, Sports Council (lead organisation), WCVA and WLGA. The programme is designed to encourage increased physical activity among 'hard-to-reach' groups, such as young people, black and minority ethnic people, disabled people and low-income people, by using the natural environment. The Big Lottery fund is providing £6.5 million funding for 15 projects across Wales between 2006 and 2010.

The National Partnership was a requirement of the Big Lottery Fund to manage the approach to the Mentro Allan Programme, to provide leadership, determine the selection criteria for the local projects, provide the strategic steer and expert advice to support all the schemes across Wales. The National Partnership will also provide support for local partnerships in designing and developing local projects to meet the required criteria for funding and identify and share best practice across Wales.

The arrangements for the partnership are cemented by a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between all the partners. The MoA relates to the bid to the Big Lottery Fund for becoming the national partnership and the subsequent management of the programme. The MoA sets out the roles and responsibilities of the partnership, the composition and role of the Board, publicity issues, the role of the Lead Partner and the principles for partnership working.

**2.32** The Assembly Government's Climbing Higher - next steps document highlights the importance of increasing physical activity amongst the population of deprived communities and that 'Communities First partnerships are a particularly useful and important vehicle for engaging with the most disadvantaged communities and reaching many of the people who will most benefit from increased sport and physical activity.'

We found that there was limited evidence of local authority Communities First officials having involvement in the local authority's efforts to increase levels of physical activity. While there are some projects in existence, such as Mentro Allan ([Case study 6](#)) and the Fitter and Trimmer (FAT) Club in Rhyl, few are running in partnership with the local physical activity forums, leisure departments and LHBs.

**2.33** We found little evidence of regional approaches such as sharing facilities and resources to increase physical activity. Whilst there are forums in place, such as the South East Wales Sports Development Forum, these comprise local authority sports development staff only, and their function is to discuss issues rather than instigate joint and collaborative action. The Beecham report pointed to the need to increase capacity by sharing services and combining expertise. A regional approach, such as is being set up to deal with issues such as waste management, would allow local authorities, with other bodies, to share facilities, resources and expertise and organise mass participation events. There are isolated examples of where regional partnerships have been set up to increase physical activity ([Case study 7](#)), demonstrating the potential for collaboration to increase efficiency and effectiveness. The Sports Council is now in the ideal position to facilitate local partnerships through its regional Active Communities staff who work across local authority boundaries.



## Case study 7: Three local authorities have joined together to form the North West Wales Outdoor Partnership

In an effort to improve the health and wellbeing of people in North West Wales, and to increase the opportunities for engaging in physical activity, a partnership was formed from representatives from the outdoor sector. Building on the platform provided by Climbing Higher, the mission of the partnership is 'to achieve an active, healthy, and inclusive Wales, where outdoor recreation provides a common platform for participation, fun, achievement and employment, which binds local communities, creates a sustainable use and understanding of the environment of Wales.'

The mission will be delivered through the partnership developing, promoting and delivering outdoor activity programmes, working with local community groups, schools, youth services and other local groups to meet local demands. The partnership was formed in 2004 with funding from the Assembly Government and the Sports Council.

It includes three local authorities working together as a regional partnership - Anglesey, Conwy and Gwynedd.

It also includes the Assembly Government, Sports Council, University of Wales Bangor, CCW, the Urdd and a number of outdoor activity and education organisations from the voluntary and private sectors. There are a number of reasons for these three local authority areas working in partnership:

- a shared wealth of natural resources appropriate for use in terms of outdoor recreation;
- well-developed outdoor sectors, catering mainly for tourists and educational visitors from outside the region;
- common cultural and linguistic characteristics; and
- a significant number of rural communities which are currently facing severe economic and social challenges and which could benefit considerably from the outdoor sector if access was widened.

The work of the partnership involves identifying current provision of outdoor activities, particularly in clubs and schools, an audit of opportunities to develop skills in leadership and performance, the employment of local people, mainstreaming the use of the Welsh language, identification of funding and the development of a website and newsletter.



## Part 3 - Performance management frameworks do not effectively support Climbing Higher nor organisations' efforts to increase physical activity

**3.1** The public sector approach to providing for sport and recreation has remained broadly the same for the last three decades or so, and is based predominantly on the provision of built facilities. However, adult participation in sport has remained fairly static over the same period. This traditional approach to provision therefore is seemingly having little impact on further improving lifestyles and the health of the nation. Encouraging people to become more active is likely to involve challenging current approaches, and questioning their effectiveness. In the words of the Sports Council, in its Framework for the Development of Sport and Physical Activity, 'If we keep on doing what we have always done, we will always get what we always got.'

**3.2** The public sector's traditional approach to sport and recreation provision has been through the provision of leisure buildings. The majority of leisure buildings in Wales were constructed in the 1970s and 1980s, and maintenance and refurbishment programmes have not kept pace with the ageing building stock. The Sports Council estimates that investment of over £200 million is needed to sustain existing leisure facilities and thereby maintain current levels of provision and service quality. These factors give rise to the risk that continuing to sustain the current infrastructure may not be the most cost-effective way of encouraging people to become more active. In order for policymakers and providers to be able to make this judgement, it is critical that they can

make the link between the resources employed (the inputs), what is delivered (the outputs) and the impact that this has on recipients (the outcomes). The key to being able to fundamentally challenge current approaches is therefore a robust approach to evaluation.

**3.3** However, effective challenge to existing practices and encouraging policymakers to explore different avenues requires a solid evidence base, particularly with regard to evaluation - 'the systematic examination and assessment of an initiative and its effects, in order to produce information that can be used by those who have an interest in its improvement or effectiveness'<sup>20</sup>. Actions designed to increase physical activity, together with programmes and initiatives, need to be robustly evaluated in order to reflect on progress, make adjustments to strategy and improve programmes to ensure better outcomes. Developing effective evaluation tools will therefore be critical in:

- evaluating the effects of strategic approaches;
- determining whether financial and other resources are being used efficiently;
- assessing the appropriateness and effectiveness of interventions in different settings and communities; and
- demonstrating accountability and influencing policymakers.

<sup>20</sup> WHO European Working Group on Health Promotion Evaluation. *Health Promotion Evaluation: Recommendations to Policymakers*. Copenhagen: World Health Organisation; 1998.

## Climbing Higher targets do not facilitate effective monitoring and evaluation

**3.4** Neither Climbing Higher nor Climbing Higher - next steps set out evaluation mechanisms or performance management arrangements. It is therefore not clear how information is to be collected and by whom, and how progress is to be measured. In addition, not all stakeholders appear to share the targets that are set out in Climbing Higher. This makes the evaluation of the impact of the strategy much harder. Of all 22 Welsh local authorities we surveyed, only 10 had specifically aligned targets to complement Climbing Higher, and only three local authorities made reference to the targeted one per cent increase per year in physical activity levels.

**3.5** The Sports Council's Framework for the Development of Sport and Climbing Higher - next steps clarify some issues regarding evaluation; but difficulties still remain in relation to evaluating some individual targets, as set out below.

**3.6** As they underpin the Assembly Government's intention to increase physical activity, we analysed the 11 targets in Climbing Higher (excluding the targets for elite sport and job creation, which lie outside the scope of this report); our detailed findings are at [Appendix 2](#). In summary, we found that:

- Only three of the 11 targets have clear mechanisms in place for measurement, a further four need clarification and four have no mechanisms in place.
- Baselines from which to measure progress are identified for only seven of the 11 targets, with further clarity required for another one.

- Given that a number of targets relate to the long term - up to 20 years - it is unclear how progress is to be measured in the shorter term. For most of the targets there are no annual or periodic milestones against which to monitor progress. Together with the absence of baseline information, this means that there is little indication of how much improvement is required and at what pace. It is not clear how information will be capable of being included in the evaluation reports to be published every four years in the mid-point of each National Assembly term, as promised in Climbing Higher.

**3.7** The Review of Health and Social Care in Wales (commonly known as the Wanless report) recommended:

- 'that the Assembly Government should bring forward policies only alongside a published evidence base, including costings and evaluation criteria'; and
- 'a programme to develop further the research base to enable an evidence-based approach ... to inform future policy making and resource allocation decisions'.

These recommendations are equally applicable to Climbing Higher.

**3.8** The importance of clarifying objectives and targets is exemplified by the first target in Climbing Higher:

'In the next 20 years Wales will match the best global standards for levels of sport and physical activity, defined, for adults, as at least 5x30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week. To achieve this we need an annual increase in overall adult physical activity levels of at least one percentage point per annum'.



## Case Study 8: Physical activity strategies in Scotland and England are focused on encouraging people to change their lifestyles

In Scotland, the strategy for physical activity, Let's Make Scotland More Active, is much more explicit in targeting the inactive population. The strategy points to evidence that the greatest health benefits occur when the least active people become moderately active, and it sets a clear strategic focus and priority on getting inactive people active and on preventing people from reducing the amount of activity that they do. Moreover, it specifically states that 'it is not the main goal of this strategy to get people who are already physically active to do more physical activity. If our efforts were focused on these people, this would result in wider health inequalities'.

In England, a similar approach is being taken to that in Scotland, where the Small Change, Big Difference Campaign is encouraging people to make minor changes in their lifestyles to improve their health. The campaign is aimed at adults with a message that 'it is never too late to start', and that 'even small changes in physical activity can make a difference'. The Department of Health stated that "there is now clear evidence that people should not be put off making a change, just because they cannot see how they could manage the full five-a-day fruit or veg intake or participate in 30 minutes a day of extra exercise<sup>21</sup>. It also said that 'the biggest gains to health and to the economy will be made by encouraging more physical activity among groups of people who don't normally do any'. Alongside this recognition of the need to target appropriate messages, the department remains committed to the Chief Medical Officer's recommendation for adults to achieve a total of at least 30 minutes a day of at least moderate-intensity physical activity on five or more days of the week as the overall target for those seeking the general health benefits of physical activity.

It is unclear whether the second part of this target means that the Assembly Government will:

- concentrate efforts to target those adults who are already active, but not yet at 5x30 minutes per week; or
- target inactive adults to increase the overall percentage of active adults.

**3.9** In practice it is likely that, at a local level, providers will need to ensure that programmes are aimed at both the sedentary population and infrequent exercisers. But to make real inroads into achieving one or other of the possible interpretations of the target requires some hard choices about where to focus scarce resources. This example illustrates that while aspirational targets are useful in setting a vision, clarity is essential in how they are to be translated into policy formulation. The equivalent physical activity strategies in Scotland and England are much clearer about their focus - see [Case Study 8](#).

**3.10** In Wales, it appears that the main message and the main target are the same: to achieve the 5x30 target. This is in contrast to England and Scotland where the message is simply to do more than is currently being done, whilst aiming towards the 5x30 target. What is not clear from Climbing Higher is that the 5x30 target can be made up of 10 minute or more portions. This is only briefly mentioned and yet is a key element of the message and could encourage more people, especially those who are sedentary, to work towards the target.

<sup>21</sup> Government News Network Tuesday 22 August 2006

## The evaluation of approaches to increasing physical activity is not well developed, and there is a general lack of robust data throughout the delivery chain

- 3.11** The Assembly Government recognises the need to build an evidence base for interventions and programmes. However, outcomes have proved difficult to measure: many initiatives are short term in nature (often because of funding issues - see paragraph 2.25), while the effect on people's health - which may require behavioural and cultural change - may take a number of years to become discernable. These factors do not make it easy to compare the impact or effectiveness of one intervention with another, and so to focus on those which make the greatest difference.
- 3.12** One of the issues facing those planning interventions and programmes at a local level is that of baseline data. Paragraph 1.6 referred to, and [Appendix 6](#) sets out in more detail, the fact that there are currently two sets of physical activity data available - the Sports Council's Adult Participation Survey and the Assembly Government's Health Survey. While the headline figures at a national level are similar, there are disparities at a local level. On the whole, local authorities tend to use data from the Adult Participation Survey and local health boards tend to use data from the Health Survey. There is therefore the potential for confusion when the bodies come together in deciding which baseline data to use to plan interventions and programmes.

- 3.13** In recognising these difficulties, the Assembly Government has resolved to establish an evaluation and monitoring group to "develop the evaluative framework that will provide the evidence base for informing progress towards the long-term vision [of Climbing Higher]". This work will include deciding which baseline physical activity data to use. In addition, evaluation methods are being incorporated within the remodelling of the GP exercise referral project ([Appendix 3](#)) by the Assembly Government's Health Improvement Division. An audit of GP exercise referral schemes across Wales has been undertaken, and it is the intention to establish a national protocol for evaluation which will provide the evidence to drive policy decisions on the project. Both of these developments are positive steps towards building an evidence base that can support policymakers in directing programmes and interventions appropriately.
- 3.14** However, determining what it is that may be useful to measure is only part of the problem. Data gathering is also problematic. The lack of computerised management information systems in some local authorities is a barrier to collecting useful customer information, and makes targeting of specific groups more difficult. In addition to this, the type of information currently gathered by local authorities that do have modern systems may not be suitable for gathering the information that can contribute to monitoring progress against Climbing Higher targets.





## Case Study 9: The evaluation of the Free Swimming initiative is hindered by poor quality data and evaluation not being built in at the design phase

The Free Swimming initiative was developed as a commitment of the Welsh Assembly Government to encourage active lifestyles and promote better health as set out in 'Wales: A Better Country' (2003).

There have been difficulties in evaluating the initiative. Evaluation mechanisms were not built into the initiative at design stage, and no guidance was issued to local authorities on initiative monitoring, with the result that each local authority developed its own systems and formats for collecting and reporting data. In November 2004 the Sports Council (on behalf of the Assembly Government) awarded a contract for evaluation of the initiative to InVEST, a research and enterprise section of Cardiff School of Sport, UWIC. The contract runs from November 2004 - July 2007.

The specification issued to those tendering for the evaluation contract was flawed. The suggested research questions set out in the specification were developed after the scheme had been designed. As a result, not all the data required to answer these questions is available from local authorities. This applies, for example, to questions on potential differences in participation levels according to age, ethnicity, disability, first language, place of residence and levels of junior swimming for term time.

Poor data collection by local authorities was highlighted by InVEST as an issue in their first interim evaluation report for November 2004 - January 2005. InVEST was then asked to pursue this issue further and made some progress in improving the management of data collection. The result was that the volume of data collected has increased significantly. InVEST's October 2005 evaluation report stated that many local authorities were still not meeting the minimum requirements, and that a number of problems in evaluating the success of the initiative still persisted. For example, there was insufficient evidence to support how 'hard to reach' groups were being targeted and engaged in the free swimming initiative, and careful monitoring was needed to gauge the extent to which 'new swimmers' were participating in the initiative. The report concluded that the difficulties experienced "may also reflect a genuine lack of awareness by some to understand the value of data collection and programme monitoring".

InVEST's third evaluation report, in 2006, neatly summarises the lack of a coordinated approach to evaluation: "while many authorities do prepare a review of the schemes, this is voluntary and most of the reports have been written for different audiences. Thus there is no common format or expectation that reporting would be against common performance indicators". These problems illustrate the importance of agreeing evaluation mechanisms at the design stage. The absence of robust evaluative data makes it difficult to determine the extent to which policy objectives are achieved.

**3.15** Case Study 9, on the Assembly's Government's Free Swimming initiative (see also [Appendix 4](#)), illustrates how evaluation has been useful in providing information to improve the administration of the schemes, but has only provided limited evidence of the impact of the schemes and the extent to which policy objectives are being met. One of the main reasons why evaluation of Free Swimming has proved difficult is that it was not built into the design of the scheme from the outset.

**3.16** In contrast, the Physical Education and School Sport national project (PESS - [Appendix 3](#)) is an example of a scheme, involving a number of parties, where evaluation mechanisms are well integrated as they were introduced at the outset of the scheme. Other evaluation arrangements have also been put in place:

- an Information and Training Officer has been appointed to set up and manage the information database related to the project including evaluation information;
- the impact of the PESS project has been monitored by Estyn at the request of the Assembly Government; and

- the Sports Council has set up a PESS website that holds research, monitoring and evaluation information and also highlights good practice.

**3.17** The Welsh Local Government Data Unit's core set of indicators for 2006/2007 contained only one indicator relevant to Climbing Higher, on attendance at local authority leisure facilities. In recognition of the need to develop further indicators, a group comprising representatives from the Data Unit, the Assembly Government, local authorities, the Welsh Local Government Association, the Sports Council and the Wales Audit Office (as observers) is intending to develop a performance management framework that can support Climbing Higher.



## Appendix 1 - Level and strength of evidence for a relationship between physical activity and contemporary chronic conditions

Condition	Preventative effects of physical activity			Therapeutic effects of physical activity	
	Level of evidence <sup>1</sup>	Strength of effect	Evidence of a dose response relationship	Level of evidence <sup>1</sup>	Strength of effect
<b>Cardiovascular disease</b> Coronary heart disease	High	Strong	Yes	Medium	Moderate
Stroke - occlusive - haemorrhagic	High Medium	Moderate Weak	- -	Low Low	Weak Weak
Peripheral vascular disease	No data/ Insufficient data	-	-	Medium	Moderate
<b>Obesity and overweight</b>	Medium	Moderate	-	Medium	Moderate <sup>3</sup>
<b>Type 2 diabetes</b>	High	Strong	Yes	Medium	Weak
<b>Musculoskeletal disorders</b> Osteoporosis <sup>2</sup>	High	Strong	Yes	Medium	Weak
Osteoarthritis	No data/ Insufficient data	-	-	Medium	Moderate
Low back pain	Medium	Weak	-	High	Moderate
<b>Psychological wellbeing and mental illness</b> Clinical depression	Low	Weak	-	Medium	Moderate
Other mental illness	No data/ Insufficient data	-	-	Low	Weak
Mental wellbeing	-	-	-	Medium	Moderate
Mental function	Low	Moderate	-	Low	Weak
Social wellbeing	No data/ Insufficient data	-	-	Low	Weak

Condition	Preventative effects of physical activity			Therapeutic effects of physical activity	
	Level of evidence <sup>1</sup>	Strength of effect	Evidence of a dose response relationship	Level of evidence <sup>1</sup>	Strength of effect
<b>Cancer Overall</b>	Medium	Moderate	Yes	No data/Insufficient Data <sup>4</sup>	-
Colon	High	Strong	Yes		
Rectal	Medium	No effect	-		
Breast	High	Moderate	Yes		
Lung	Low	Moderate	-		
Prostate	Medium	Equivocal	-		
Endometrial	Low	Weak	Yes		
Others	Low	Equivocal	-		

**Notes**

1 Volume and quantity of data

2 From bone mineral density data

3 Included the effect of activity on disease as well as weight status

4 However, a low level of evidence indicates weak effects on physical function and fatigue and following cancer treatment

‘This table provides a simplified summary of the nature and volume of evidence and an estimate of the strength of effect of activity currently indicated by that evidence. The ‘level of evidence’ is intended to be a general indication of the volume and quality of the available evidence. The ‘strength of effect’ is intended to indicate how positive, or otherwise, the findings are.

There is considerable variability in both the volume and quality of studies found in different areas of research regarding activity and health. Cardiovascular disease is relatively well investigated compared with areas such as obesity and mental health that have only recently attracted interest. The full picture is further confounded by the fact that physical inactivity affects a wide range of diseases and risk factors, many of which may occur in the same individual. The multiple effects of increased activity across these many chronic conditions are rarely considered in study design, so the true value of physical activity in terms of public health may well be underestimated’.

Source: *At least five a week - evidence of the impact of physical activity and its relationship to health*, Chief Medical Officer of England, 2004



## Appendix 2 - Measurement and evaluation of Climbing Higher targets

The table below is an analysis of the targets set out in the Assembly Government strategy for sport and physical activity, Climbing Higher. The analysis considers each target: whether there is a mechanism for measuring it, whether responsibility for measuring it has been identified, whether a baseline against which to measure has been set, and whether incremental milestones have been included.

### Target 1

In the next 20 years Wales will match the best global standards for levels of sport and physical activity, defined, for adults, as at least 5x30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week. To achieve this we need an annual increase in overall adult physical activity levels of at least one percentage point per annum.

Mechanism for measurement	Responsibility identified	Baseline set	Milestones included
?	x	✓	✓

#### Remarks

- unclear whether the Sports Council Adult Participation Survey or the Welsh Health Survey is to be used to measure performance against the target;
- Climbing Higher and Climbing Higher - next steps use Adult Participation Survey, but likely that the Assembly Government will prefer to use Welsh Health Survey data; and
- the target lacks some clarity as it refers to overall adult physical activity levels rather than explicitly those reaching 5x30 minutes.

### Target 2

All children of primary school age will participate in sport and physical activity for at least 60 minutes, five times a week. All primary schools will provide a minimum of 2 hours of curricular based sport and physical activity per week.

Mechanism for measurement	Responsibility identified	Baseline set	Milestones included
?	x	✓	x

#### Remarks

- the target is not defined as light, moderate or vigorous physical activity;
- it is not explicit that the minimum of two hours curricular based sport and physical activity per week is per pupil;
- baselines set through the Sports Council's Primary school-aged Children's Participation in Sport survey, but not clear how wide the definition of physical activity is; and
- the Sports Council assumes that it will continue to collect the data to measure performance against the target through its children's and young people's surveys.



### Target 3

At least 90 per cent of boys and girls of secondary school age will participate in sport and physical activity for 60 minutes, five times a week.

All secondary schools will provide a minimum of 2 hours of curricular based and 1 hour of extra-curricular sport and physical activity per week.

Mechanism for measurement	Responsibility identified	Baseline set	Milestones included
?	x	✓	x

#### Remarks

- The target is not defined as light, moderate or vigorous physical activity.
- It is not clear what the target of one hour extra-curricular activity refers to. Is it one hour per pupil? Does it refer to the opportunity provided or the take-up by pupils?
- Baselines set through the Sports Council Secondary school-aged Children's Participation in Sport Survey, but not clear how wide the definition of physical activity is.
- The Sports Council assumes that it will continue to collect data to measure performance against the target through its children's and young people's surveys.

### Target 4

Physical inactivity imposes substantial economic costs on Wales, currently estimated at more than £500 million a year. These costs will be more than halved in the next 20 years.

Mechanism for measurement	Responsibility identified	Baseline set	Milestones included
✓	x	✓	x

#### Remarks

- It is implied that a mechanism for measurement currently exists.

### Target 5

Fourty per cent of adults will be members of sports clubs or centres.

Mechanism for measurement	Responsibility identified	Baseline set	Milestones included
✓	x	✓	x

#### Remarks

- baseline set through Sports Council Adult Participation Surveys; and
- the Sports Council assumes that it will continue to collect the monitoring data through the Adult Participation Survey.



<b>Target 6</b> Eighty per cent of children will be junior members of sports clubs or centres.			
Mechanism for measurement	Responsibility identified	Baseline set	Milestones included
✓	X	✓	X
<b>Remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Baseline set through Sports Council Primary and Secondary school-aged Children's Participation in Sports Surveys.</li> </ul>			

<b>Target 7</b> All public sector employees and three-quarters of all other employees will have access to sport and physical activity facilities, at or within a 10 minute walk of the workplace.			
Mechanism for measurement	Responsibility identified	Baseline set	Milestones included
X	X	X	X
<b>Remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ there is currently no way of measuring performance against this target; and</li> <li>■ there is no definition of what constitutes a sport and physical activity facility.</li> </ul>			

<b>Target 8</b> All children in Wales will have experienced an outdoor adventure activity before the age of 12 and a further experience before the age of 16.			
Mechanism for measurement	Responsibility identified	Baseline set	Milestones included
X	X	X	X
<b>Remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ there is currently no way of measuring performance against this target; and</li> <li>■ the target does not define whether this is only in an educational setting, or whether it includes privately-organised or casual activities.</li> </ul>			

### Target 9

The percentage of the people in Wales using the Welsh natural environment for outdoor activities will increase from 36 per cent to 60 per cent.

Mechanism for measurement	Responsibility identified	Baseline set	Milestones included
?	x	✓	x

#### Remarks

- a mechanism for measurement and a baseline is implied, but it is not clear how and by whom performance against this target can be measured; and
- the Sports Council assumes that it will continue to collect this data through the Adult Participation Survey.

### Target 10

Ninety five per cent of people in Wales will have a footpath or cycle-path within a 10-minute walk.

Mechanism for measurement	Responsibility identified	Baseline set	Milestones included
x	x	x	x

#### Remarks

- It is not clear how performance against this target will be measured.

### Target 11

No one should live more than a six-minute walk (300m) from their nearest natural green space.

Mechanism for measurement	Responsibility identified	Baseline set	Milestones included
x	x	x	x

#### Remarks

- it is not clear how performance against this target will be measured; and
- there is no definition of what constitutes a natural green space.



## Appendix 3 - Interventions, schemes and funding sources for increasing physical activity in Wales

Scheme	Lead organisation	Partners	Funding (£m)	Main funding source	Duration	Details
Active Lifestyles Innovation Fund	Sports Council		6.6	Sports Council	2005-2009	Workplace Activity: enterprise grants encouraging employers and employees to build activity into the working week to support the Corporate Health Standard; Community Activity: to include green exercise, voluntary sector challenge, community buildings challenge; Regeneration Challenge: piloting new approaches to develop disadvantaged communities through sport and physical activity.
Capital and Minor Grants	Sports Council		10.8	Sports Council	2005-2009	Innovation grants including small capital funding for supporting new community and workplace initiatives and improvements to community sports facilities; Active Lifestyles Community Capital: additional in-year capital allocation to support Climbing Higher.
Community Chest	Sports Council		4	Sports Council	2005-2009	The is designed to encourage more people to become more physically active more often. The maximum grant is £750 in any 12 month period. The main purpose of the fund is to support good projects which will create new or improved sport and physical activity opportunities that are additional to what is already in place and would not be able to happen without a grant. The fund is very flexible and there are few rules for what is and is not eligible for support.
Dragon Sport	Sports Council	Local authorities; schools	4.4	Sports Council	2005-2009	The scheme provides opportunities for primary school children with the opportunity for extra-curricular sporting activity. It aims to broaden the sporting interests of children who are already taking part in particular sports and to involve children who currently lack such opportunities outside school PE lessons.
Equality and Social Inclusion	Sports Council		2.4	Sports Council	2005-2009	To support local development in priority communities where barriers are greatest and participation is very low, in particular, Communities First areas.

Scheme	Lead organisation	Partners	Funding (£m)	Main funding source	Duration	Details
Exercise Funding	Sports Council		0.4	Sports Council	2005-2009	Developing more and better exercise leaders and instructors.
Exercise Referral	Various including Big Lottery Fund and Assembly Government	LHBs and local authorities	Big Lottery and Assembly Government funding through Health Inequalities and money for implementation of new scheme	Various	2007/2008 to 2009/2010	Exercise referral schemes are a partnership between the patient, a GP practice and a leisure centre or other physical activity facility or activity, to help improve health and wellbeing. Patients will be invited to take part in an exercise programme that will be individually designed schemes are anywhere between six and 12 weeks. A number of the schemes are for patients who are rehabilitating from coronary heart conditions.
Food and Fitness Action Plan	Assembly Government		9.2	Assembly Government	2006-2009	The Implementation Plan lists actions targeting children and young people to increasing physical activity levels and improve nutrition. Actions include a grant scheme to provide support projects that tackle obesity by encouraging both active lifestyles and healthier eating within priority groups, extension of the Healthy Schools Scheme and development of training resources.
Free Swimming	Assembly Government	Sports Council, Local authorities, Welsh Amateur Swimming Association (WASA)	25	Assembly Government	2003-2009	This initiative offers free swimming to under 16s during the school holidays and over 60s at any time at local authority facilities. The scheme is delivered by local authorities and subsidised by the Assembly Government. As well as the potential health benefits from increasing levels of physical activity, the scheme aims to improve standards in swimming.
Green Gym	British Trust for Conservation Volunteers		Unknown	Various		This is an alternative way of improving levels of physical activity and fitness by involvement in practical conservation activities such as planting hedges, creating and maintaining community gardens or improving footpaths.
Healthy Living Centres	Local authorities; LHBs; Third Sector		Unknown	Big Lottery Fund		Network of healthy living centres throughout Wales which are designed to complement and support government public health plans. Centres target the most deprived communities and address wider determinants of health - eg, social exclusion and social and economic aspects of deprivation.





Scheme	Lead organisation	Partners	Funding (£m)	Main funding source	Duration	Details
Informal Active Recreation	Sports Council		0.24		2005-2009	Scheme to support increased physical activity through youth organisations.
Mass Participation Events Challenge	Assembly Government		1	Assembly Government	2005-2009	A scheme to encourage new or returning participants through activity events and their continued post-event participation.
Mentor Allan	Sports Council; Assembly Government; WLGA; NPHS; Welsh Council for Voluntary Action	Local authorities, Princes Trust; Third Sector; Communities First; Sports clubs and associations; National Trust; Young People's Partnerships; Disability Sport Wales; governing bodies	5.2	Big Lottery Fund	2005-2009	The scheme aims to increase activity levels amongst the 'hard-to-reach' sedentary population by increasing the recreational use of the natural environment in Wales through a series of locally-run projects.
North West Wales Outdoor Recreation	Local authorities; Assembly Government; Sports Council; Urdd; CCW; private and third sector		0.3	Sports Council	2005-2009	Programme aims to provide opportunities to young and marginalised people in Anglesey, Gwynedd and Conwy to experience outdoor adventure activities.
Public Health and Health Professions Department (formally Office of the Chief Medical Officer) - various programmes	Assembly Government	Various	10.5	Assembly Government	2005/2006 to 2008/2009	Various interventions aimed at reducing health inequalities where projects are either physical-activity specific or with an element of physical activity. Physical activity programmes including Moving More Often, Voluntary grants, Physical activity network and walking projects.
Out-of-School-Hours Learning School Sports Programme	Big Lottery Fund		0.6	Big Lottery Fund		Programme aims to increase the number of opportunities available for young people to take part in sport and physical activity outside of normal school hours. The programmes provide a range of innovative activities targeted at traditional non-participants to encourage an interest in sport and physical activity.







Scheme	Lead organisation	Partners	Funding (£m)	Main funding source	Duration	Details
PE and School Sport Plan	Assembly Government	Local authorities; schools; Estyn, ACCAC, Youth Sport Trust	8.7	Assembly Government	2005-2009	The Plan promotes a common vision for improving standards in PE and school sport. It identifies ways in which the Assembly Government and those involved in providing PE and school sport might take action to address the recognised shortcomings. The Sports Council is responsible to the Assembly Government for managing the implementation of the plan. The scheme includes using 22 PESS co-ordinators, one in each local authority who is responsible for taking the initiative forward at a local level. It also includes the establishment of development centres, a cluster of at least four institutions, a minimum of three of which must be schools.
Physical Education and School Sport	Sports Council		39	Big Lottery Fund		Capital investment in sports facilities on school sites for school and community use.
Safe Routes to School	Sustrans	Assembly Government; local authorities, private sector - eg, Tesco	Unknown	Various	Unknown	The scheme aims to not only tackle the congestion caused by the school run, but also to remind children and parents that there are alternatives to the car and that those alternatives can be fun and healthy.
Secondary School Sport	Sports Council	Local authorities; schools	7.6	Big Lottery Fund	2005-2009	Ensuring young people have a wide range of positive sporting and physical activity experiences. To develop skill and knowledge as well as enjoyment so that they want to participate in sport and physical activity and continue doing so into their adult lives.
Urban Walks	Assembly Government	Local authorities - Carmarthen, Gwynedd and Wrexham	0.025	Assembly Government	2004-2006	The concept is designed to help people be more habitually active in their everyday local environments. The scheme uses a leaflet that promotes a cluster of local walks. The format encourages its application across a wide range of environments both urban and rural, and across sectors to allow for a variety of community interventions. It aims to offer habitual opportunities for bite-sized chunks of activity within the local environment to the widest range of the population possible, including hard-to-reach groups.



Scheme	Lead organisation	Partners	Funding (£m)	Main funding source	Duration	Details
Walking the Way to Health	CCW	Big Lottery Fund, British Heart Foundation; Third Sector	1.1	Big Lottery Fund	2003-2007	This is a campaign to improve people's health and wellbeing by promoting regular brisk walking. The campaign consists of a number of local projects overseen by CCW, but each project has the flexibility to suit their project to local needs. Training is offered to volunteers leading walks and for co-ordinators of local schemes. The main aim of the project is to get 80,000 people walking who are from areas of poor health or who were previously inactive. The new Walking in Wales project which is currently being developed by the Sports Council with funding from the Assembly Government and CCW will help develop future walking projects.

## Appendix 4 - Wales Audit Office assessment of pilot Free Swimming initiative










The assessment tool uses a traffic-light scoring system. The assessment in **bold** represents the score we have given to the scheme.

Self Assessment question	Assessment		Comment
1. Is the required outcome sufficiently clearly defined?		<b>Target is vague or can only be measured by a suite of measures.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The initiative contains no specific targets - driven by number of aspirational aims and objectives including, removing barriers to participation, increased health benefits, improving standards in swimming, engaging young people and develop interest in other sports/activities and improve participation in swimming among 15-24 year old women.</li> <li>Aquatic Development Plans are required by the Sports Council, follow a set template. This does not require setting of local targets.</li> </ul>
		Target is clear and unambiguous but no coherent strategy.	
		Success is clearly defined by a target that is unambiguous and supported by a comprehensive, well-understood strategy.	
2. Is the evidence base sufficiently robust?		Little research and no piloting result in weak evidence base. Resources wasted in ineffective plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence base consists of a preliminary pilot scheme carried out in the 2003 school summer holidays. However, this was based on data of the number of swims only and subsequent evaluations have found that this and later data on number of swims is poor quality.</li> <li>Much of the evidence was based on perceptions of parents and pool managers rather than quantitative data.</li> <li>The initiative is based on the perception that cost is the main barrier to increasing participation in swimming as a physical activity. This is inconsistent with data from the Sports Council's Participation Survey which found that only eight per cent of 7-11 year olds and 10 per cent of 11-16 year olds thought cost was a barrier to using local authority facilities.</li> </ul>
		<b>Some research on existing evidence highlights factors on which to focus. Not all interventions properly implemented at all levels.</b>	
		Extensive preliminary research and piloting of interventions. Interventions at all levels aligned to maximise effectiveness and minimise cost.	






Self Assessment question	Assessment		Comment
3. Is there sufficient capacity, including available resources to deliver?		No overall assessment of resources across delivery chain resulting in a risk of misdirecting resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>grants payments are made to each local authority upon the receipt by the Sports Council of signed heads of agreement and data returns;</li> <li>the evaluation suggests that financing of the initiative is minimal in that it covers costs of entrance fee but little incentive to attract other potential users;</li> <li>some local authorities used additional funding to create more posts such as scheme co-ordinators, swimming development officers and lifeguards; and</li> <li>local authorities are concerned that future funding will be unhypothecated and used for other services.</li> </ul>
		<b>Assessment of resources available undertaken and capacity issues being addressed.</b>	
		Keen awareness of resource and capacity issues. Resources directed to where they are most effective and capacity regularly reviewed.	
4. Is there a shared Operational Plan describing how services will be provided?		No operational plan apart from some internal departmental documents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No specific operational plan has been produced by the Assembly Government.</li> <li>However guidance has been provided to local authorities on implementing the initiative which includes criteria for funding and issues which should be included in Local Development Plans.</li> <li>No guidance provided on consultation or who to involve in developing plans.</li> <li>The evaluation found that 'several local authorities failed to follow the Delivery Plan format set out by the Assembly Government. In a number of instances sections were omitted completely or, particularly with regard to the 16 and Under Scheme, were substituted for promotional leaflets attached to the back of the plans. This made it difficult to identify whether key issues/criteria had been met'.</li> </ul>
		<b>Operational plan present but most delivery partners have not been involved in its production nor is it widely available.</b>	
		Operational plan produced with all delivery partners; widely available and well understood. Front line staff and service users consulted.	
5. Does the Funding Strategy influence activity in line with the objectives of this target?		Multiple short-term funding streams with funding not dependent on performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding comes from one funding stream.</li> <li>However, it is not at all dependent on performance, as no targets or performance indicators have been developed.</li> <li>Assembly Government issued criteria for funding which includes target groups, minimum provision, data collection and publicity and marketing. However, the focus is on outputs rather than outcomes.</li> </ul>
		<b>Longer-term funding allows more certainty, but there are still multiple overlapping streams. Some performance-related funding.</b>	
		Funding streams mapped as part of strategy development; number of funding streams rationalised. Funding is structured to incentivise performance and awarded on proven performance. Where appropriate, funding periods extended.	



Self Assessment question	Assessment		Comment
6. Do local, regional and national levels communicate regularly using reliable information so that there is good co-ordination?		No mechanism in place for the different levels of the delivery chain to come together and address issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ no provision made by Assembly Government for sharing best practice and the establishment of regional and national networks;</li> <li>■ issues raised and shared through the formal evaluation of the scheme; and</li> <li>■ WASA is an important partner and the evaluation found that 'the relationship between local authorities and WASA was extremely variable'.</li> </ul>
		<b>Some co-ordination at regional level but large gap between local and national understanding of risks and issues facing delivery.</b>	
		Regular contact between all levels of the delivery chain. Officers play active role co-ordinating communication between the frontline and the centre so that information from the frontline informs decision making.	
7. Are levers and incentives fit for purpose?		<b>Few levers in place apart from some funding.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Without targets and performance indicators, funding is the only lever in place and is dependent on a few basic criteria.</li> <li>■ According to the evaluation, basic criteria have not all been met by all local authorities. However, it does not seem to have had any effect on the levels of funding provided by the Assembly Government to local authorities.</li> </ul>
		Lever established but without consultation; not piloted so not always effective.	
		Lever designed around consideration of flexibility and agility of partners to respond. Pilots conducted to ensure best levers are implemented.	
8. Are the risks to the delivery chain well managed?		<b>No overall assessment of risk undertaken.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ No evidence that the initiative was subject to a formal risk assessment at national or local level.</li> </ul>
		Internal risk assessment undertaken, but awareness of key risks not cascaded through delivery chain.	
		Thorough risk assessment undertaken, culture of risk management present throughout delivery chain with high awareness of key risks at each level of chain.	

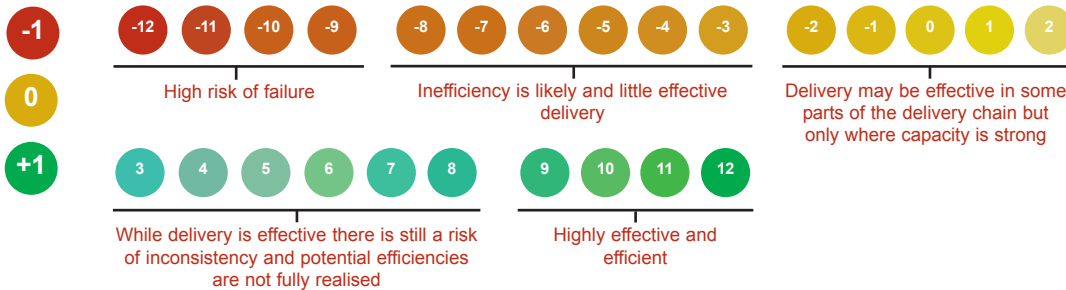


Self Assessment question	Assessment	Comment
9. Do performance measurement systems keep delivery on track?	Multiple performance management systems linked to many funding streams; hard to measure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At present, no expectation for local authorities to review performance. Performance indicators have not been set a national or local level. Where local authorities are reviewing the initiative, this is voluntary rather than obligatory.</li> </ul>
	<b>Performance management systems can measure progress but indicators not entirely accurate.</b>	
	Regular monitoring. Frequent stock takes. Performance easy to track against objectives.	
10. Is there strong leadership that is accountable through clear governance structures at all levels of the delivery chain?	Leadership poorly assigned. Shortage of clear guidance results in lack of clarity about who should take the lead.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership appears to be in place in some local authorities where the lead has been taken by a named individual.</li> <li>At national level, even though the lead is taken by the Assembly Government's Sport Policy Unit, there is no named individual with overall responsibility. However, such a post is in the process of being created.</li> <li>Uncertainty in local authorities about the role of the Sports Council.</li> <li>Lack of targets, incentives and performance measures ensures little accountability at national and local level.</li> </ul>
	<b>Some guidance issued on roles and responsibilities, but lack of incentives and measures to ensure accountability.</b>	
	Leadership at all levels of delivery chain is understood and resourced; backed by incentives and performance management.	
11. Are there mechanisms in place for regular feedback and review to support continuous learning?	Nothing on place to promote feedback. No facility to disseminate examples of best practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At present, this facilitated through the evaluation of the initiative whereby best practice examples are provided and shared.</li> <li>Once evaluation complete, this needs to be maintained through a formal system led by Assembly Government.</li> </ul>
	Guidance filtered down from national to local level, but no mechanisms to communicate feedback from local level upwards.	
	<b>Frequent feedback given to and from all levels of the delivery chain. Feedback reviewed, and guidance and examples of good practice shared.</b>	

Self Assessment question	Assessment	Comment
12. Have systems to achieve efficiency been built into the delivery chain?	 <p>No overall Procurement Strategy so economies of scale not maximised. Assets and services not shared. High administration costs due to lack of innovation, internal review and challenge to working practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whilst this is not entirely relevant in such an initiative, there is room for a more regional approach, sharing resources across local authority boundaries. For example, having regional swimming development officers or using pools for structured or targeted activities. At present, there is very little evidence of this happening.</li> </ul>
	 <p><b>Opportunities to increase economies of scale not fully realised. Some sharing of assets and services. Room to reduce transaction and administration costs further.</b></p>	
	 <p>Key suppliers engaged early when designing delivery chain. Sharing of assets and services where appropriate. Front line configured to best deliver services. Customers encouraged to use most cost-effective delivery channels. Regulatory regime in place drives good performance.</p>	

### Assessment

For each of the 12 questions, score: -1 for red, 0 for amber and +1 for green.





## Appendix 5 - Methodology

- 1 *This study addressed the question, is the Welsh public sector's approach to physical activity coherent and likely to help meet the Assembly Government's targets?* It addressed the following two sub-questions:
  - 1 Is there a co-ordinated framework in place for planning the delivery of community sport and physical activity?
  - 2 Will strategies and plans increase physical activity levels to meet Assembly Government targets?
- 2 The fieldwork included a variety of methods:
  - i Document review (Wales) - we examined plans, strategies and documents relating to increasing physical activity from a number of organisations including: Assembly Government (including Sports Policy, transport, education, environment and planning), Sports Council, local authorities, LHBs, NHS Wales, NPHS, Chief Medical Officer, CCW, Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency. Our analysis enabled us to map whether plans and strategies are aligned to Climbing Higher.
  - ii Document review (UK and overseas) - we examined governmental strategies and plans from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Canada, Finland and New Zealand.
  - iii Document review (general) - we examined a number of academic reports and audit reports from Wales, UK and overseas.
  - iv Semi-structured interviews with officials from the Assembly Government (Sport Policy, health improvement, education, environment, planning, transport and Communities First), Sports Council, NPHS, Environment Agency Wales, CCW, Forestry Commission Wales, Disability Sport Wales, Welsh Local Government Association, Welsh Sports Association, Welsh Athletics, Welsh Rugby Union, WASA, University of Glamorgan, University of Wales Institute Cardiff, Cardiff University, Bevan Foundation, Welsh Development Agency, Wales Centre for Health, Sustrans, Healthy Living Centres, Dragons Rugby Trust, Big Lottery Fund, NHS Scotland, Scottish Executive, Skills Active, Wales Council for Voluntary Action and Football Association of Wales Trust.
  - v Visits to local authorities - we visited Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Cardiff County Council, Ceredigion County Council and Wrexham County Council. These visits involved semi-structured interviews with senior officers of the leisure, transport, planning, environment, health promotion, Communities First and strategic policy divisions. We also carried out corresponding visits to the LHBs.
  - vi Presentations and seminars - we presented to a number of groups in order to encourage their input, make various stakeholders aware of the work we were carrying out and discuss emerging findings. This included presentations to Walking the Way to Health Steering Group, the Physical Activity Network Wales, the All-Wales Sports Development

Benchmarking Group and the Active Communities, Active Lives seminar, to launch the work of the Bevan Foundation on physical activity.

- vii Surveys - we carried out two surveys. We surveyed all 22 local authorities on issues including strategic issues, consultation in regard to plans and strategies; physical activity data; mapping of needs; regional working; local partnerships; targets, monitoring and evaluation; and schemes and interventions. We also surveyed all 22 LHBs on issues including strategic issues; development of action plans; responsibilities; promotion; partnerships; and schemes and interventions.





## Appendix 6 - Data for levels of physical activity in Wales

- 1 Data on physical activity in Wales is available from two sources, the Sports Council's Adult Participation Survey carried out every two years and the Assembly Government's Welsh Health Survey. The following table compares the two surveys:

	Welsh Health Survey	Sports Council Adult Participation Survey
Timing	Continuous ongoing survey collecting data over a full-year to take account of seasonal variations.	Bi-annually
Methodology	An achieved sample of around 15,000 adults and 3,500 children is aimed for each year, to include a minimum 600 adults from each local authority area.	More than 22,000 adults surveyed (1,000 in each local authority). Interviews are conducted each month over a 12-month period (November to October).
Questioning	Survey asks adults on which days in the past week they did at least 30 minutes of light, moderate and vigorous exercise or physical activity. Blocks of activity lasting more than 10 minutes, which are done on the same day, count towards the full 30 minutes. Respondents were asked to include physical activity which is part of their job.	<p>The survey asks about the last seven days ending the day before the survey is taken. Respondents are asked to remember what they did on each of the last seven days and tell how much time was spent exercising to at least a moderate level on each day.</p> <p>Respondents are allowed to accumulate exercise time - so if a respondent spent 15 minutes brisk walking, 15 minutes heavy gardening and 15 minutes swimming on the same day this is recorded as 'about 45 mins'. When accumulating exercise time only activities which were at least 10 minutes in duration should be counted.</p>
Definitions	<p>Examples given of each type of activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ light exercise/activity - housework (eg, hoovering, dusting), walking at an average pace, golf, light gardening (eg, weeding);</li> <li>■ moderate exercise/activity - heavy housework (eg, spring cleaning, walking with heavy shopping), fast walking, dancing, gentle swimming, heavy gardening (eg, digging); and</li> <li>■ vigorous exercise/activity - running, jogging, squash, swimming lengths, aerobics, fast cycling, football.</li> </ul>	<p>Moderate exercise - something that has made the person breathe a bit harder and heart beat a bit faster for 10 minutes or more.</p> <p>Examples of the sorts of physical activity referred to are shown on a card and include activities such as work, DIY, gardening and climbing stairs. These are just examples and are the minimum level, so, if the person exercised beyond this level (eg, playing football, aerobics class etc), this time should be included.</p>

	Welsh Health Survey	Sports Council Adult participation Survey
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 12 per cent of adults reported that they had done no exercise or physical activity in the past week and a further 22 per cent had done no more than light activity; and</li> <li>■ 29 per cent of adults (36 per cent of men, 23 per cent of women) reported meeting the guidelines for physical activity in the past week.</li> </ul> <p>Results show that a higher proportion of men than women.</p>	See Figure 2 & 3.