

Audit Committee

AC(3) 09-09 (p2) : Annex A : 02 July 2009

Update on the response to the report of the National Assembly for Wales Audit Committee's report on: Increasing Physical Activity in Wales

SF AJ 0067 09 : Doc 3

Recommendation i

a. Identify which government department is taking the lead on the Climbing Higher strategy and increasing physical activity in Wales.

Government Response September 2008

Recommendation Accepted

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to developing a fresh approach to work on physical activity which will revise and extend the existing Climbing Higher strategy. We will publish a revised strategic action plan on physical activity in the New Year that will set out targets and supporting actions. The development of the action plan will be led at official level by the Department of Public Health and Health Professions (DPHHP). It will be an important element of our broader public health strategic framework "Our Healthy Future" which is being led by the Chief Medical Officer. The action plan will encompass the contributions of all those Assembly Government departments which have a contribution to make to this critical policy agenda. This includes the Heritage Department and the very successful programmes managed by the Sports Council for Wales. The development of the action plan will be led at official level by the Chief Medical Officer who will report on a regular basis to the Heritage Minister who will continue to be responsible for policy and strategy on sport and physical activity within the Welsh Assembly Government Cabinet. The Chief Medical Officer will work with Heritage Department officials in supporting the Heritage Minister in this role. We see this sort of arrangement as a natural part of the joining up which is required in cross cutting policy areas of this nature right across the Welsh Assembly Government.

Progress to date

Discharged.

Since September 2008 the Chief Medical Officer has had overall responsibility for supporting the Minister for Heritage on physical activity and the Department of Public Health and Health Professions (DPHHP) has the lead for co-ordinating cross departmental work on physical activity. Over the last eight months DPHHP has led the development of the physical activity strategic action plan, Climbing Higher: Creating an Active Wales.

b. Establish a high level steering group to provide much needed leadership, as recommended by the Auditor General.

Government Response September 2008

Recommendation Accepted

The Welsh Assembly Government has set up a senior steering group to oversee the development of the new strategic action plan for promoting physical activity. This group will also be charged with improving the co-ordination of the delivery of programmes which impact on the physical activity agenda. The group will include senior policy officials from the Department of Public Health and Health Professionals (DPHHP); Heritage Department; Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), Environment, Sustainability and Housing (ESH); Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS); Department for Constitutional Affairs, Equality and Communications (CAEC); Department for Social Justice and Local Government (SJLG) and the Department for the Economy and Transport (DE&T). The group will be chaired by the Chief Medical Officer who is also leading on the development of the broader Public Health Strategic Framework for Wales.

Progress to date

Discharged.

An internal task and finish group and an external stakeholder task and finish group were established in October 2008 to inform the development of the action plan. The internal group met fortnightly and the external group monthly during the development phase. They were both chaired by the Head of Health Improvement Division, who reported directly to the Chief Medical Officer. The Chief Medical Officer engaged other Directors in the agenda through the Permanent Secretary's Business Group.

In May 2009, following the drafting of the action plan, a cross departmental senior management group on physical activity, chaired by the Chief Medical Officer, was established to oversee the delivery of the plan. This group consists of Directors of relevant Departments and its aim is to oversee the delivery of policy across government to increase levels of physical activity in Wales. See Annex 1 for more

details.

One of the recommendations in Climbing Higher: Creating an Active Wales is that a Physical Activity Strategy Board consisting of key external stakeholder is established chaired by the Minister for Heritage. Subject to the outcome of the consultation this group will be established in Autumn 2009.

c. Nominate a senior individual to champion physical activity work across the Assembly Government and to liaise with other stakeholders in overseeing and coordinating all physical activity work in Wales; as recommended by the Auditor General.

Government Response September 2008

Recommendation Accepted

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises the critical points made by the Wales Audit Office and is anxious to ensure that there should be a significant improvement in the co-ordination of government policy interventions aimed at promoting physical activity. In addition to the senior level steering committee we will, therefore, also be nominating a senior official who will lead collective work promoting and co-ordinating the work on physical activity. The post holder will be charged with improving the co-ordination and impact of the policies on physical activity going on right across the Welsh Assembly Government. The individual will report directly to the Chief Medical Officer.

Progress to date

Discharged

Working to the Chief Medical Officer, in September 2008 the Head of Health Improvement Division was appointed to lead the co-ordination of work on physical activity, supported by a new Grade 6 post.

d. Define roles and responsibilities clearly across the Assembly Government and partner organisations involved in the delivery of the physical activity agenda, as recommended by the Auditor General.

Government Response September 2008

Recommendation Accepted

This response makes clear that the Heritage Minister will remain responsible for policy on physical activity within the Cabinet and that at official level the work underway right across the Welsh Assembly Government will be co-ordinated by the Chief Medical Officer. The new strategic action plan for promoting physical activity will define roles and responsibilities for the delivery of physical activity actions both within the Welsh Assembly Government and across our external partner organisations. The new action plan will also make clear how our work on physical activity fits into the wider Public Health Strategic Framework and how delivery is achieved. It will also confirm the crucial contribution of the Sports Council as well as the work which other key partner organisations are commissioned to undertake.

Progress to date

Partially discharged

Climbing Higher: Creating an Active Wales outlines priority areas, actions to be delivered and the key departments or agencies responsible for delivery.

Officials, working with stakeholders, have begun developing a document which will outline the roles and responsibilities of all the partners engaged in the physical activity agenda across Wales. It will be published alongside the final plan as a supporting document.

e. Consider the possibility of placing some sort of statutory duty on local authorities in relation to provision for physical activity.

Government Response September 2008

Recommendation Partially Accepted

This matter will be kept under review but for the time being Ministers do not believe that there is a requirement for additional statutory tools to carry forward the physical activity agenda. Local authorities are already under a statutory duty to produce health and well being strategies. Ministers are anxious to see a greater prominence given to the need to promote physical activity in the development of these local strategies. Mechanisms for achieving this will be an important feature of the new action plan.

Progress to date

Partially discharged

This matter is being kept under review and will be considered by the Physical Activity Strategy Board.

To ensure effective co-ordination of delivery of physical activity at local level, Climbing Higher: Creating an Active Wales identifies Health Social Care and Well Being partnerships as the medium for local leadership and co-ordination of physical activity. It also recognises the role of Local Authority Partnership Agreements (LAPAs) which have begun the process of developing plans for co-ordinated action on increasing physical activity at local level, and recommends that LAPAs are enhanced so that they all address the broader physical activity agenda and support the implementation of this plan whilst addressing local needs.

Recommendation ii

We recommend that the Assembly Government and its delivery partners should instigate a public awareness-raising campaign that clarifies the message that even engaging in small amounts of exercise will be beneficial to health.

Government Response September 2008

Recommendation Accepted

The Health Challenge Wales campaign for 2008-2009 will highlight the benefits of physical activity as part of its work. There will be a particular focus on encouraging more of the sedentary population to try a little exercise as a start to improving their health. Health Challenge Wales works through the media and partner organisations across Wales. Further developments of the campaign will be informed by evaluation.

Progress to date

Partially discharged

Throughout November 2008 and February 2009 the Health Challenge Wales campaign focussed on the message 'small steps to a healthier you' and featured physical activity as a theme. This included TV advertising and partnership engagement, such as advertising at the Millennium Stadium through sponsorship of the Welsh Rugby Union.

Stakeholder communications workshops were held in December 2008 and January 2009, facilitated by the Ministerial Communications teams, to consider issues such as the current evidence on social marketing in influencing behavioural change. An audit of all communications activities across Welsh Assembly Government portfolios has been undertaken to see how we can effectively co-ordinate messages and activity.

The draft action plan places a strong emphasis on encouraging the sedentary population to undertake small amounts of physical activity, building it into everyday life through activities such as walking and cycling. This message has been communicated through the publicity supporting the consultation.

Following a presentation to the cross departmental senior management group on physical activity, the Ministerial Communications teams are currently looking at options for a social marketing campaign to support the action plan. Proposals will be considered by the Physical Activity Strategy Board in the Autumn.

Recommendation iii

We recommend that the Assembly Government expedites work on the action plan.

a. sets out how departments and sponsored bodies will coordinate and report on activities that contribute to increasing physical activity

b. is consistent with other work being undertaken on the public health strategic framework

1. is consistent with the funding that the Assembly Government intends to provide

Government Response September 2008

Recommendation Accepted

Work is already underway on a number of fronts. The thematic sub-group of the Public Health Strategic Framework examining physical activity has now met 3 times. There will be extensive engagement with a range of key partner organizations through the autumn in order to prepare the new action plan which will take account of the recommendations set out above. This engagement and consultation will be an essential to secure the necessary support of these partner organisations. The intention is that the new strategic action plan for promoting physical activity should be developed alongside the new Public Health Strategic Framework. The intention is that these documents will be published in the Spring of 2009 and be complementary.

Progress to date

Discharged

The physical activity strategic action plan, Climbing Higher: Creating an Active Wales has been drafted and was launched for a 12 week consultation on 5 May 2009 (Annex2).

The plan highlights national leadership and local delivery as two of its six underpinning themes and in these sections sets out how Welsh Assembly Departments and key partners, including sponsored bodies, will coordinate and report on activities that contribute to increasing physical activity. The key mechanisms as detailed above in responses to recommendations will be at a national level, the Ministerial led Physical Activity Strategy Board, supported by the Chief Medical Officer's cross departmental senior management group, and at a local level the Health Social Care and Well Being Partnerships and the Local Authority Partnership Agreements.

Climbing Higher: Creating an Active Wales has been developed alongside the Public Health Strategic Framework Our Healthy Future and it will provide the delivery mechanism for the physical activity ambition within that framework. It also links directly with the outcomes being sought under the recently launched Walking and Cycling Action Plan.

Recognising that the next five years will be difficult in relation to government and public sector expenditure, against the background of the current economic climate, the draft plan focuses on making more effective use of current funding levels for physical activity.

Recommendation iv

We recommend that the Assembly Government and its delivery partners should carry out a fundamental review of funding for physical activity; as recommended by the Auditor General. The review should include:

- a. An assessment of the funding that currently supports the leisure centre infrastructure in Wales.**
- b. Consideration of the optimum level of facility provision required and the level of funding needed to sustain it.**
- c. Funding support for the voluntary sector.**

Government Response September 2008

Recommendation Partially Accepted

WAG will review its physical activity funding programmes as part of the development of the revised strategic action plan for the promotion of physical activity. This will include the funding provided to voluntary organisations. We will also want to draw upon the evidence base developed by the Sports Council for Wales following its review of local authority leisure centre infrastructure provision.

However the Welsh Assembly Government believes that it would be a mistake to link the promotion of physical activity too tightly to the funding and provision of specialist sports facilities. The challenge is to encourage people to build physical activity into their normal daily routines, for instance through walking and cycling.

Progress to date

Partially discharged

A Sport Council for Wales Facility review assessed the condition and appropriateness of indoor sports and leisure facilities.

Climbing Higher: Creating an Active Wales recommends that the Physical Activity Strategy Board's initial programme will be aimed at ensuring that we are joining up effectively across the Assembly Government and achieving maximum impact from our investment in this area. Key priorities for action for the Board will include a review of the current approach to funding and a look at infrastructure in a broader context, to ensure that maximum use is made of not just traditional sport and leisure buildings but also schools, health and community buildings, outdoor facilities, green spaces and the countryside.

Recommendation v

We recommend that the Assembly Government implement the recommendations in relation to the Free Swimming initiative made by both the Auditor General and the evaluation report produced by the University of Wales Institute Cardiff.

- a. The Assembly government should set national targets for participation against the scheme's objectives.**
- b. The Assembly Government and Sports Council should evaluate whether the scheme has delivered value for money.**
- c. Funding provided by the Welsh Assembly to local authorities should be linked to performance.**
- d. Local delivery plans for Free Swimming should contain all the required information to ensure that all key**

criteria have been met, including consistent evaluation mechanisms.

Government Response September 2008

Recommendation Partially Accepted

The Welsh Assembly Government commissioned the review of the Free Swimming pilot, via the Sports Council for Wales, in order to assess the effectiveness and learn lessons from the scheme. The working group which was established as part of the scheme has considered the evaluation report findings and what steps need to be taken to enhance the impact and effectiveness of the scheme and has presented those findings to the Welsh Assembly Government for it to consider. As part of this work, we will also undertake work to evaluate the value for the money of the scheme during the pilot phase. We expect all this work to lead to a new understanding with local authorities including the development of consistent evaluation mechanisms. Ministers will also be invited to consider the implications for funding of the programme moving forward taking into account the evaluation report and the value for money of the pilot phase.

Decisions will also need to be taken on the balance between national and local targets and on mechanisms by which funding might be tied to performance.

Progress to date

Partially discharged

The Free Swimming Steering Group has agreed core objectives for the future of the scheme, identified amended minimum criteria and relevant performance indicators which are being considered by Local Authority delivery partners. Responses are being collated and the new guidance will subsequently be devised and issued later this year once the consultations have been completed, for implementation in 2010. The recommendations from the evaluation of the Free Swimming initiative will be incorporated in the new guidelines for the scheme.

An evaluation regarding the additionality and implications for cost effectiveness of the pilot scheme has been undertaken and a report will be available shortly. This will also include recommendations regarding possible changes to funding formulae, performance related target setting and implications of the lessons learned in relation to future investment. Free Swimming investment will be directed through the LAPA process to ensure that there is enhanced integration of the scheme with other programmes and initiatives as part of the move towards increased flexibility to reflect local needs and issues. Future Local Authority Aquatic Plans will become fully integrated within LAPA Delivery Plans from 2010 when the existing stand alone plans come to an end. This approach supports the overall aims of Climbing Higher: Creating an Active Wales.

Recommendation vi

We recommend that, in addition to its usual initial response to our report, the Assembly Government provide this Committee with an update report, tracking progress against each of our recommendations, within 12 months of the date of our hearing (ie no later than 5 June 2009).

Government Response September 2008

Recommendation Accepted

We would welcome the opportunity to provide the Committee with an update report based on the recommendations in this report by no later than 5 June 2009.

Progress to date

Discharged

This report addresses the recommendation.

Annex 1

Cross Departmental Senior Management Group on Physical Activity

Membership

Dr Tony Jewell, Chief Medical Officer, Director, Public Health and Health Professions Department

Chris Tudor-Smith, Deputy Director, Public Health and Health Professions Department

Gerry Quarrell, Head of Nature, Access and Marine Unit

John Howells, Director, Culture Department

Mike Clancy, Director, [Qualifications, Curriculum Learning and Improvement](#) Group Department

Chris Tweedale, Director, Children, Young People and School Effectiveness Group

June Milligan, Director for the Department of Social Justice and Local Government

James Price Director, Transport & Strategic Regeneration department

Bob Hudson, Director, Strategic Direction, DHSS

Ruth Meadows, Head of Heritage MCT

Draft Terms of Reference

Aim

To oversee the delivery of policy across government to increase levels of physical activity in Wales.

Objectives

To identify opportunities to join up and align policy areas and existing strategies relating to physical activity;

To identify areas for specific action to improve physical activity levels across Wales in line with the action plan and to meet identified gaps in local and national provision;

To advise on the development of a research and evaluation plan to support the monitoring, implementation and future development of programmes to increase physical activity levels;

To raise all Ministers' awareness of the physical activity agenda and how it relates to their portfolios;

To make recommendations to, and to consider recommendations from, the Physical Activity Strategy Board.

To develop and implement a coordinated communications strategy, including a social marketing campaign, across the Welsh Assembly Government and external stakeholders to raise levels of physical activity.

Process

Each group member to send an informed senior colleague if they are unable to attend a meeting;

Meetings to be held on a quarterly basis 3 to 4 weeks prior to the Physical Activity Strategy Board.