

Inquiry into safe place to play and hangout

Introduction

1. The Sports Council for Wales (SCW) is the national organisation responsible for developing and promoting sport and active lifestyles. It is the main adviser on sporting matters to the Welsh Assembly Government and is responsible for distributing funds from the National Lottery to sport in Wales. This report outlines the schemes the Sports Council for Wales has in place to encourage children and young people to play sport and be active. It also considers some of the barriers still in place and makes recommendations for action.

THE WORK OF THE SPORTS COUNCIL FOR WALES

2. SCW runs programmes such as Dragon Sport, 5x60, PE and School Sport as well as working with national governing bodies of sport and other national organisations to improve what is on offer to children and young people. This work helps children develop the necessary physical skills to successfully take part in sport and exercise and provides them with ongoing opportunities to practise, develop and enjoy those skills.

PE AND SCHOOL SPORT

3. Our Physical Education and School Sport (PESS) programme provides training and guidance to school staff to help children develop the basic skills needed for them to play successfully in physical situations. Being able to move, send and receive balls and other equipment, balance and coordinate actions helps greatly in children being able to play and explore a huge variety of games and activities. Our new 'Play to Learn' resources and training help school staff with their understanding of fundamental movement skills and how to teach them in fun and creative ways. Our inclusion work helps teachers ensure children with disabilities are included in PE and our inclusion specialist works with the design and content of all our training and resource materials to incorporate good practice into all elements of our work.
4. The PESS programme is recognised as having increased subject knowledge and teacher confidence and increase in motivation and enthusiasm amongst pupils. *"PESS has allowed us to develop a more structured approach especially in teaching gymnastics, dance and in developing the use of ICT in the PE curriculum. The scheme has enriched our PE curriculum and has given staff confidence in their teaching methods and has involved pupils in planning their own progression and achievement."* Quote from Primary PE Coordinator. Because this work is delivered through curriculum PE and the PESS programme has now been rolled out to most schools in Wales, this is a scheme that has a positive impact for huge numbers of children across Wales.

DRAGON SPORT

5. Dragon Sport encourages schools and clubs to provide opportunities for children to take part in sporting activities and 175,000 children registered on the scheme in the last year. Some 3500 of these were described as disabled, although this figure probably under-represents the reality as many school staff are unwilling to identify a child as disabled on a register. Training is offered to teachers, parents, coaches and

other volunteers to help them run activity sessions that are fun, inclusive and purposeful. Nearly every primary, junior and special school in Wales runs Dragon Sport clubs and the vast majority of these are run free of charge.

6. Dragon Sport activities are also run as part of over 800 community clubs. These can be sports clubs, girls and boys clubs, youth groups, etc as well as part of leisure centre provision. While many of these clubs do charge children to attend their clubs, charges are generally kept low and arrangements are often put in place for children from low income families or for families where a number of siblings attend the club.
7. A significant emphasis is placed on running activity sessions in a way that help children feel confident and capable. For example, games are designed so that no one is 'out' and so that children are too busy having a go to watch and embarrass others. Dragon Sport has a fair play charter and clubs are encouraged to use this, sometimes writing their own version, to help children involved think about how they behave and how certain behaviour on their part could make sport an unpleasant experience for others.
8. An example of where the school has placed great value on Dragon Sport activity is a special school where the school's governing body see it as added value and benefit that staff can stay behind to allow the programme to run for their children. The head is quoted as saying '*People used to say "Ah, look at those poor kids" whereas now they say "Wow, look at what those kids can do!"*'

5x60

9. Secondary schools pupils are able to access a wide range of sporting opportunities through the 5x60 programme. 5x60 officers, based in schools, work with the young people in their school to put on a programme of activity designed around what they want and encourage young people to take part. Young people are able to try out new activities in an environment which is familiar and where coaches are supported to help young people feel comfortable and at ease taking part. Informal, recreational activity is facilitated in many schools as well as more formal structured coaching and competition. For example, in a school in Powys the PTA donated a sum of money in order to launch the 5x60 equipment lending scheme. This scheme allows pupils to borrow equipment during the lunch hour and return it when they have finished using it. Pupils can borrow equipment including footballs, kwik cricket sets and Frisbees. These sessions have proven to be really popular with over 100 pupils joining in each lunchtime. It allows pupils to set up their own games in an informal setting which the pupils have responded well too. In particular, pupils who would not normally be playing sport during their break time have been involved.
10. 5x60 has been gradually taken up by schools across Wales over the past 3 years and the last academic year was the first year that 5x60 has been offered in most secondary schools in Wales. Some 168,000 young people were registered on the scheme in the year and 6,600 of these had special educational needs. These figures are expected to rise dramatically this year as the 5x60 scheme becomes better established in schools.
11. There are some good examples of young people with disabilities taking part in 5x60. For example, in some schools in Torfaen a variety of activity sessions have been run to encourage participation by young people with hearing impairments and volunteer

support has been key to enabling this. In a school in Rhondda Cynon Taff activities offered have included kayaking, gorge scrambling and rock climbing. One pupil with Cerebral Palsy has attended every session. He has not allowed his illness to prevent him from doing any of the activities on offer. During his normal life he has to rely on walking sticks and leg braces to allow him to get round. However, during 2 hours of George scrambling he relied upon neither of these walking aides. Although thoroughly exhausted he had a brilliant time. The instructors praised his determination and strength and said that he was an inspiration to all the pupils. In another school activities have been adapted to make them inclusive. For example in baseball pupils who struggled with catching were given the option of using a Velcro catching pad in order to make catching easier but also improve hand eye co-ordination. This did not single out SEN students as other pupils made use of the catching pads as well.

12. There are also some fantastic stories about how 5x60 is helping make a big difference to young peoples' lives. A girl in year 7 was finding the move to secondary school very difficult. Staff noticed a huge improvement in her confidence, contentment and well being during her second term and have attributed this to her involvement in 5x60. She made friends with pupils that she would not normally have met, was able to talk to staff about her interest and had something to look forward to all week. The staff have commented "*The shift from needing the teacher's full attention at all times, towards a positive self sufficiency has been one that has amazed her primary school and has been a pleasure to observe.*"

DISABILITY SPORT WALES COMMUNITY PROGRAMME

13. The Disability Sport Wales Community Programme is a joint initiative between the Sports Council for Wales, the Federation of Disability Sport Wales and the 22 local authorities across Wales. The scheme is aimed at developing quality community based sporting and recreational opportunities for disabled people throughout Wales. Some 8500 new members joined clubs last year as a result of this work.

CLUB WORK

14. Voluntary clubs are the mainstay of local provision for sport and provide many young people with the chance to find and develop their talents. From the Urdd to the local football club, the boxing club to the Girls and Boys club, these clubs are often a vital component of local communities. Most are run by volunteers and offer training and competition to juniors at rates that are often subsidised by adult club members. SCW supports the National Governing Bodies of sport to work with their local clubs to help improve the number, range and quality of opportunities that are on offer.

LEADERSHIP

15. Young people are encouraged to take up leadership training as part of all of our work. This starts in primary schools where children are given leadership training and encouraged to organise activities in the playground at break times, be a 'pal' to encourage others to join in, organise an equipment loan scheme, referee a game and so on. This is progressed through the age groups and in secondary schools many young people take level 1 and 2 Sports Leaders' Awards. Those who display a real talent and interest in leadership often also go on to take sport specific leadership and coaching qualifications. They are able to put their learning into practice in structured and formal settings such as running afterschool sessions in both secondary and primary schools or helping out in a local sports club but often also put their skills into action organising more informal activities with groups of friends.
16. A good example of this work is a girl who was an underachieving year 10 pupil. By her own admission, she was occasionally found standing outside the classroom, instead of in the lesson. She had shown a spark of interest in some dance sessions and the 5x60 Officer encouraged her onto a dance leader's course, despite the teachers' concerns that she was unlikely to be committed to the course let alone leading dance sessions afterwards. However, the 5x60 Officer persevered and she developed into an excellent young leader. She regularly supported the dance sessions, taking the lead on work delivered. The dance group took part in a competition and although unplaced, they did extremely well, particularly as all of the other groups were taught either by teachers or had involvement from dance teachers. She was recognised for her efforts as part of the Young Leaders Group which won an Achievement Award. As a result of being involved in 5x60, her attendance to school was improved. She said it gave her a reason to turn up.
17. Another example is a pupil who has been a victim of bullying and has been encouraged to volunteer as a leader by her counsellor. This has really helped her grow in confidence.

COMMUNITY FOCUSED SCHOOLS

18. There are some great examples where community focused schools are making a significant difference to the availability of both structured and unstructured opportunities for young people. For example, Porth community school has restructured its school timetable and runs a significant extracurricular programme every evening, as well as activities at weekends and later activities on Friday nights. The 5x60 scheme is an integral part of this. Activities are based on a survey of young peoples' views and on what can be found in the local area. Much of the feedback from young people shows a strong desire for sporting activities and this is reflected in the provision. Links are made with the local leisure centres and transport provided from the school to the centres and home again to activities run on 2 nights a week. The school facilities are also used to provide activities and this structured provision also encourages young people to use the school premises on a less formal basis and many youngsters will be found outside of the activities, sitting on benches, chatting with friends and socialising more generally. This creates an environment where young people feel welcome and the presence of other youngsters and adults supports a greater sense of well being and minimises undesirable behaviour. It

should be noted that significant extra funding is provided by the local authority over and above community focussed school monies.

GOOD PRACTICE IN CHILD PROTECTION

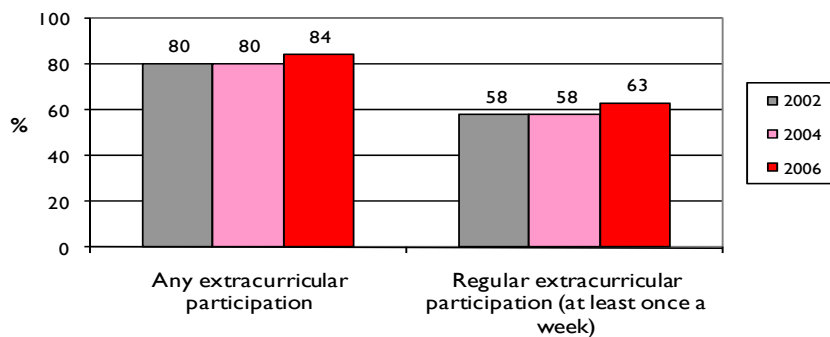
19. SCW has developed the *Framework for Safeguarding and protecting children in sport in Wales* in partnership with the Child Protection in Sport Partnership (CPSU). These set out standards to help create a safe sporting environment for children and young people and protect them from harm. The Sports Council for Wales works closely with the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) to support National Governing Bodies in achieving the standards and thus ensures that NGBs are supported in adopting appropriate Child Protection policies and procedures, and that these are implemented into sports at a club level. SCW is a key partner on the newly formed Safeguarding Children and Young People Through Sport Advisory Group for Wales.
20. Through its network of tutors SCW co-ordinates the planning and delivery of key Sports Coach UK training in child protection for national Governing Bodies, club volunteers and coaches. These courses provide very practical advice to club personnel.

PARTICIPATION MEASURES

21. SCW surveys children and young people about their participation in sport on a biennial basis. Key extracts from this research are outlined in this next section and demonstrate that many different factors affects how much activity children take part in and that these can be both practical barriers and attitudinal barriers. Figures 1 and 2 show participation levels for children aged 7-11 (school year 3-6) and Figure 3 shows levels for young people aged 11-16 (school years 7-12).

Figure 1 Percentage of children participating in **extra-curricular sport**

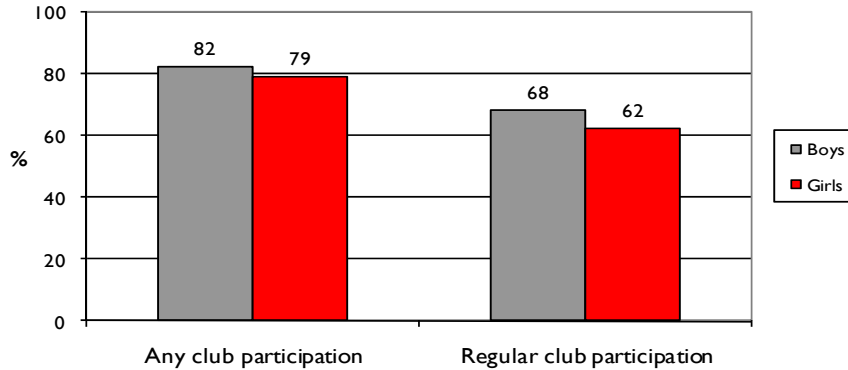
Base: children aged 7-11 years in school years 3-6, in 2002, 2004 and 2006



The greatest variation in participation is by age with any extracurricular participation increasing from 71% at age 7 to 93% at age 11.

Figure 2 Percentage of boys and girls participating in **club-based sport**

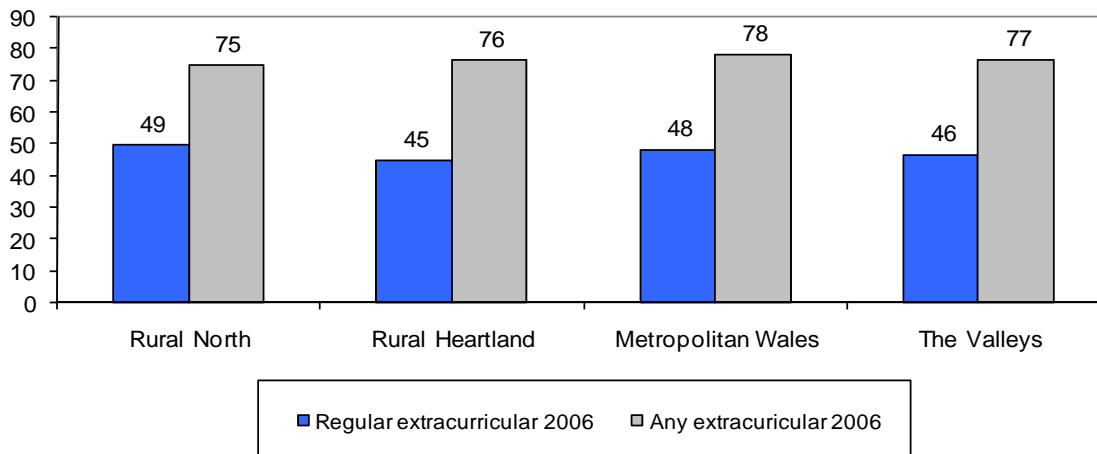
Base: boys and girls aged 7-11 years in school years 3-6



All four Sports Council for Wales regions now have similar rates of regular participation: 66% of children in the Rural Heartland and Metropolitan Wales regions regularly undertake activity in clubs, compared with 65% in the Rural North and 64% in the Valleys.

Figure 3: Percentage of young people participating in extra-curricular activity by SCW region

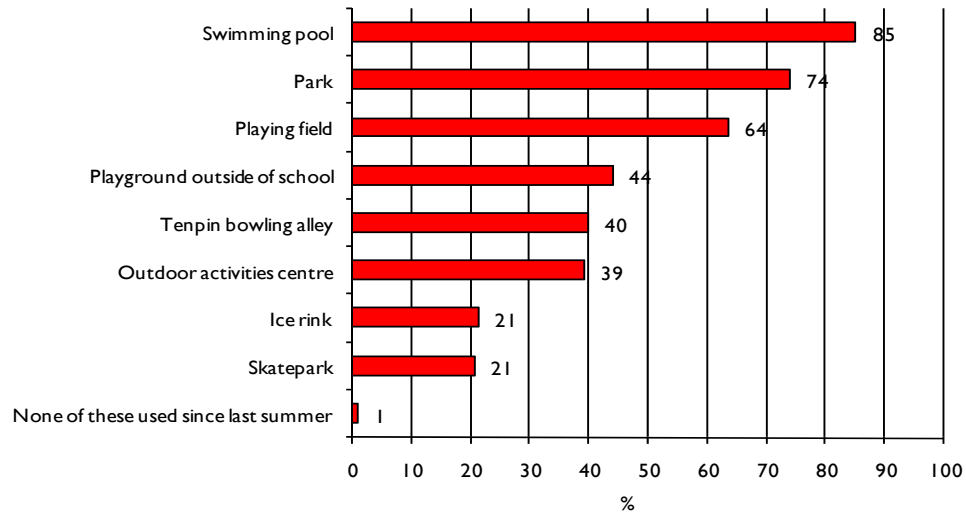
Base: boys and girls aged 11 – 16 years in school years 7-12



22. Eighty percent of young people have taken part in club based activity in the previous year with 61% taking part on a regular basis. Club participation rates show little variation across the SCW regions and range from 79% in Metropolitan Wales to 81% in the Rural North and the Valleys. Regular club participation rates range from 58% in the Rural Heartland and 62% in both Metropolitan Wales and the Valleys.
23. Many of the boys who took part in focus groups played for various clubs outside of school, including football, rugby and boxing. Their enjoyment in this was clear and they recognised the benefits of participation:
- *It keeps you fit. You don't get tired, and you feel like you can do more with your time;*
 - *When we play away from home it gives you confidence;*
 - *You get more confidence as you get better;*
 - *It keeps you from hanging about with nothing to do. Stops you getting into trouble.*
- Girls also cited the benefits of being in a sports club:
- *When I'm playing footie and I score a goal it gives you such a buzz!;*
 - *Dancing relaxes me; it makes me feel better;*
 - *With surfing I love it, it's dangerous and fun.*
24. Children were asked which of a list of facilities they had used for sport or exercise in the past year. The most common were swimming pools, followed by the park and playing fields. There are some gender differences in the facilities used, though the general pattern remains the same. Boys are more likely than girls to utilise skateparks and playing fields, while the opposite is true for swimming pools, parks and ice rinks. Only 1% of children stated that they had not used any of the facilities listed to engage in sport or exercise.

Figure 4 Percentage of children using various facilities for sport or exercise in the past year

Base: children aged 7-11 years in school years 3-6



BARRIERS TO EXTRA-CURRICULAR AND CLUB SPORTS PARTICIPATION

25. Figure 5 reveals the explanations offered by 7-11 year olds for not taking part more in extracurricular activities. Among those children that never take part the fact that they have never been asked was most commonly stated as the reason why, closely followed by not having enough spare time. Lack of time is also the commonly cited barrier among secondary school pupils as shown in Figure 6. As at primary school, never having been asked is an important reason, but secondary pupils are more likely to feel that they are not good enough at sport. Dislike of sport per se comes towards the bottom of the list of barriers for both primary and secondary pupils.
26. There are no clear differences in the barriers by region, and rural areas seem no worse off in terms of children saying transport is an issue or it is difficult to get home after school for example.
27. For secondary pupils, we can split the barriers by whether the pupil has free school meals or not as a proxy measure of deprivation; but again there are no clear differences in the barriers.

Figure 5 Barriers to (increased) extra-curricular participation among children

Base: children aged 7-11 years in school years 3-6

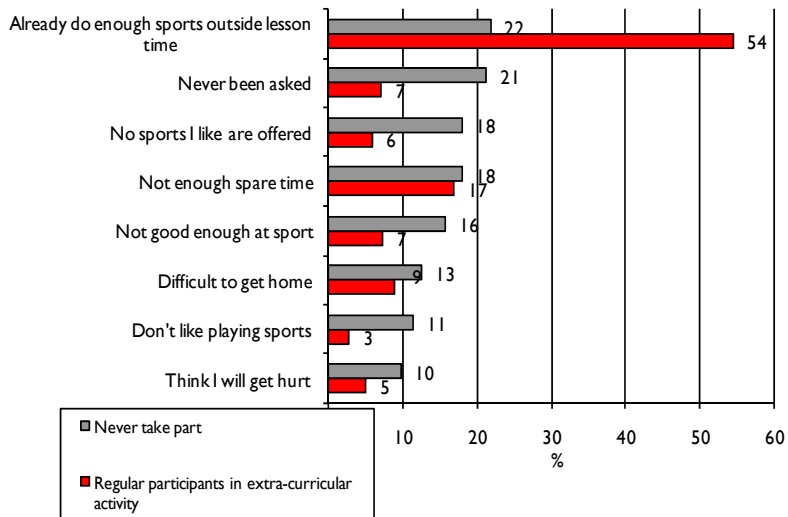
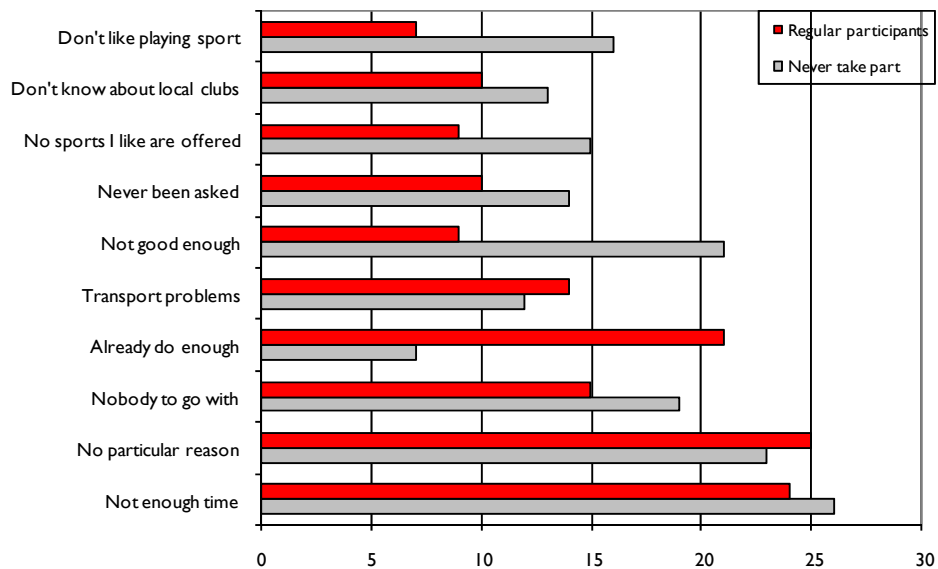


Figure 6: Barriers to (increased) extra-curricular and club participation among young people - percentages

Base: children aged 11-16 years in school years 7-12



28. Similar issues were raised in the focus groups with secondary school pupils. Peer pressure and not being good enough was frequently mentioned. Some of the girls

mentioned transport problems – their families did not have a car and they couldn't take part in after school activity:

- *Staying after school means that you miss the bus and have to walk a long way.*

29. Other interesting issues that were raised in the focus groups were that sometimes sport was off-putting because of injuries, rain and unsporting behaviour. One group of boys had the following discussion:

- *You do get aggressive people when you're playing football;*
- *One of our boys got punched in the face;*
- *It's just silly. It's sport. You're supposed to enjoy it, not fight!*

Girls also raised this as a barrier:

- *It can sometimes be a bit too competitive, and a bit violent.*

30. A practical barrier that was noted by both boys and girls was that GCSEs, options and school timetables restricted pupils from taking part as much as they wanted to:

- *If we choose PE, we won't get to do another subject, but if we don't we won't get as much PE as we want to do;*
- *I used to play rugby for the local side but I don't have time now. I want to get good GCSEs and there's no time for training and things;*
- *I'll go back and will go to competitions again. It's too important to me. But for now, I've got GCSEs and I want to go to University.*

Clearly, despite the barriers mentioned it seems that the majority of pupils are keen to do sport or physical activity if they feel it is accessible and the right opportunity for them.

AN IDEAL FUTURE?

31. We want to see more children hooked on sport for life. We want to see families embracing sport. It's about going back to basics and reminding ourselves that it's often the simple things that bring people together. Be it for a child's wellbeing, a desire to satisfy that collective competitive team spirit, or merely to 'do something active', sport is the ideal vehicle.

32. We need more teachers who are competent, confident and enthusiastic about teaching PE. We want to see further commitment to teacher training, the teaching of PE and schools using the power of sport to educate and inspire young people, particularly those at the margins of society

33. We want to see parks within easy walking distance of peoples' homes, where children of all ages can play, where children can climb, balance, run, jump; parks that are full of people of all ages being active, from teams taking part in formal sport and competition, to groups of children skipping, older people going for a walk, families playing a game of French cricket, a group of friend using jumpers for goalpost for a

game of football, a big sister teaching her brother how to do a basketball lay up, to children and families playing grandmothers footsteps, stuck in the mud and other games

34. An infrastructure that makes it easy for people to take part would make a huge difference to people taking part in both structured and unstructured activity. We need well used walking and cycling routes to facilities, we need safe spaces in every street where children can 'play out' with limited supervision, where parents are confident that they won't be run over or picked on by other children, where signs saying 'ball games welcome here' outnumber 'No ball games' signs. We need leisure centres and community buildings that welcome young people 'hanging out' or kicking a ball around.
35. Schools can play a huge role in providing a safe, welcoming environment for children and young people to meet and play together. They can be hubs of activity all day and evening, everyday of the week, places where sports clubs are encouraged to run junior activity by incentives such as discounted facility rates. We need schools where a wide range of activities are provided at reasonable prices through schools working together with youth and leisure services; schools where transport is linked to the provision of those activities; schools where young people are encouraged to come in and take part form a strong element of vibrant communities.
36. The voluntary sector can work hand in hand with public services to provide opportunities for young people. In an ideal world, it would be easy for people to give up an hour here and there to help share their talents and help young people learn something new or just have fun. Processes and procedures would focus on facilitating this and any new legislation would be brought in with this in mind.
37. For us to successfully engage children and young people in play and sport, we need to ensure they are actively involved in decisions about the services and opportunities open to them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Planning:

1. That facilitating play, sport and physical activity be a part of the initial thinking when planning guidance is put together
2. That planning applications for new developments always prioritises the need for people (including those whose mobility is impaired) to be active as a routine part of their life. Ensure local facilities and services are easily accessible on foot and by bicycle. Ensure children can participate in physically active play. (NB this is also a recommendation from NICE in their guidance on promoting and creating built or natural environments that encourage and support physical activity). That the need for very local facilities (i.e. within 5-10 minutes' walk) is recognised in developments

Cooperative Programming:

3. That better use is made of community buildings such as schools and leisure centres

4. That a wide range of activity programmes are jointly planned by youth services, leisure services and the voluntary sector and access/transport to them provided
5. That every child is given opportunities to gain and practise physical skills within and beyond the school curriculum

Training:

6. That all professionals involved in the physical development of a child from health visitors, to nursery nurses, primary teachers, secondary PE specialist and coaches have the right training, knowledge and skills to undertake this successfully. In particular, that primary school teachers are given sufficient PE training time as part of their initial teacher training to be able to help children gain fundamental movement skills.
7. That programmes that target parents support them with ideas on how to get involved in helping their child play and develop skills
8. That greater encouragement is given to people to train as leaders and coaches and that the importance of volunteers in providing valuable community activity is recognised through increased priority for the funding of their skill development.

Volunteers:

9. That the impact of new legislation on volunteers helping run activity is considered before legislation is introduced.
10. It is made easier for volunteers to help run activities. E.g. universal insurance scheme are put in place, vetting systems transfer easily from one organisation to another
11. That young people are encouraged to volunteer in voluntary clubs.