

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol | Culture,  
Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Cymryd rhan mewn chwaraeon mewn ardaloedd difreintiedig | Participation in sport in disadvantaged areas  
CCWLSIR SDA 04

Ymateb gan Chwaraeon Cymru | Response from Sport Wales

# Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

## Participation in Sport in Disadvantaged Areas

### Sport Wales Response

March 2022

sportwales  
chwaraeoncymru

# Participation in Sport in Disadvantaged Areas

## Overview

- 1.1 Sport Wales is the national organisation responsible for developing and promoting sport and physical activity in Wales. We support the delivery of strategic priorities through the Vision for Sport in Wales and the Sport Wales Strategy. We distribute Welsh Government Funding and National Lottery grants; investing in elite and grassroots sport to enable sport in Wales to thrive. We want Wales to be a more active, healthier nation for everyone.
- 1.2 Sport Wales welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, International Relations and Sport Committee's inquiry into sport in disadvantaged areas. Our data relates to the provision, access, and enjoyment of sport and physical activity of people of all ages, in all areas of Wales. Our insight will support the committee by developing it's understanding the of benefits of engaging in sport and physical activity, and how in taking an intersectional approach - these benefits will extent to the broad spectrum of society.
- 1.3 The **Vision** for Sport in Wales is the platform for cross sector engagement in sport and physical activity, and seeks to transform Wales into an active nation, where everyone can have a lifelong enjoyment of sport and physical activity.
- 1.4 **Importantly, The Vision is not just a mission for Sport Wales to work towards.** Rather, it is the collective vehicle for us all, in transforming Wales into a truly active nation.
- 1.5 The Vison was co-produced with a wide range of stakeholders and represents the voice of the people of Wales. A collaborative, cross sector, and cross-party effort in working towards The Vision will:
  - Improve population health and wellbeing
  - Provide the people of Wales with the skills to reach their potential
  - Support communities to flourish
  - Create opportunities for everyone to join in
  - Promote Wales to the world through our sporting approach.
- 1.6 **#WeCanWales.** Sport Wales asserts that The Vision is for everyone. We would be happy to discuss more about The Vision for Sport in Wales with the Committee.

1.7 Much of the below evidence relating to childhood data is drawn from the School Sport Survey. The survey, run by Sport Wales, is the oldest and largest per-capita of its type in the world. We are extremely proud of this innovative and world leading approach to pupil voice. The survey detail below relates to the 2018 survey as the most recent iteration. A new School Sport Survey will be undertaken this year and we would welcome the committee's encouragement to schools to take part and look forward to sharing constituency level results with members in the very near future.

## **2. What are the main barriers to participation in sport in disadvantaged areas? How do these intersect with other factors including:**

- **Age, Sex and gender, Socioeconomic status, Geography, Disability, Ethnicity?**

2.1 There are barriers to participation in sport amongst groups that experience a higher risk of poverty, social exclusion, discrimination, and violence compared to the general population. This includes but is not limited to - people from ethnic minorities, migrants, those with disabilities, elderly people, children, women and girls, and people who are gender and sexually diverse.

2.2 Further, when one or more of the above characteristics or social dimensions intersect; equitable opportunities for participation may be less, with the quality of experience less favourable. Put simply - intersectionality can intensify and result in inequality, and sport is not immune to this.

2.3 Geographical location can be a contributing factor in the ability to participate in sport, although we should be careful to not assume sport as the only single consistent variable impacted by rurality or, that rurality always means disadvantage. There are several other drivers such as: frequency of public transport and facility provision which differ in rural settings. Participation in sport may be the end outcome from these other drivers which, therefore, reinforces the need for considered, collaborative policy analysis and implementation in less urban settings which lie outside of the sport division alone.

2.4 Broadly, we understand from our insight and expertise that the main barriers to sport may be: structural, institutional, personal or social – and in almost all instances, are made up of a combination of these.

- 2.4.1 **Structural barriers** exist when access is non-existent, limited or when the sporting environment itself is not suitable, or not able to be adapted to meet the needs of an individual.
- 2.4.2 **Institutional barriers** mean that opportunities to access sport are hidden, and/or removed from an individual because of poorly designed systems; or systems that have been designed to only suit certain users.
- 2.4.3 **Personal and social determinants** will mean as individuals begin to navigate the structural and institutional barriers – they will encounter their own unique challenges, based specifically in relation to who they are and their personal circumstances.
- 2.5 Although in practice, it is an intersectional combination of factors that impact sport participation - when considered in isolation, the individual characteristics of age, sex and gender, socioeconomic status, disability, ethnicity, and geography present widespread challenges.
- 2.6 **Age** – There is strong evidence to suggest that patterns established in early years, may carry through into later life which is why building lifelong habits for sport participation is critical in young people. Given those from more deprived areas are less likely to participate in sport, we know the return on investment of building lifelong habits by capturing engagement from those communities is particularly important. The role of education and the school setting is critical in this regard given this is where we can impact on the most captive audience. Ensuring the new curriculum, and the health and wellbeing AoLE within it delivers on the principles of embedding activity and sport within the school day is wholly important to this aspect of equality of opportunity. How schools operate as community hubs around the school day, which may not need to be the role of the teaching profession, is also a key component of success.
- 2.7 Sport Wales has deliberately reflected this in its new investment approach - specifically using the voice of young people through mechanisms such as the School Sport Survey, ensuring that public money is invested as a direct result of public demand.
- 2.8 This investment approach has taken away the sense of sports competing against one another for resource and aims to foster greater collaboration across sports. This is hugely important, as well as collaboration across education and health settings, to support multi-sport offers to support young people from disadvantaged communities lead active lives. That collaboration should no doubt extend to resource prioritisation. There are bolder

opportunities to invest in sport through existing health and education funding streams as part of a preventative health agenda, and proactive education approach.

- 2.9 Global evidence completed by the [World Health Organisation](#) (WHO) suggests that one in four adults do not meet the recommended global physical activity levels required for optimal population health. Physical activity guidelines set by the WHO recommend that **all** adults should do at least 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week and that older adults should include 'multicomponent' physical activity within this. Multicomponent activity can enhance functional capacity, improve balance and strength, and prevent falls.
- 2.10 Older adults face a range of systemic and institutional barriers when engaging in sport. Navigating systems, particularly those that are solely based in online format can impact on the ability to access information and obtain knowledge about opportunities to be active as older adults often experience digital exclusion - exacerbated in disadvantaged areas where there is can be increase in digital division, and poverty. Public Health evidence tells us that environmental drivers such community infrastructure, access to toilets, weather and safety are also common barriers faced by an older population. These barriers mean engagement in sport is impacted by wider policy drivers – outside of sport alone.
- 2.11 Frailty, including the fear of falling, pain and low activity tolerance are personal barriers related to age, which may further impact on participation in sport and physical activity. It is because of this, that early intervention is paramount and that a 'one size fits all approach to sport' will not be successful. Activity intervention should be tailored to suit individual, and community needs and considered as an essential preventative public health measure across multiple policy portfolios.
- 2.12 **Gender** – sex, gender diversity and sexual orientation, impact in participation, success, and the quality of experience in sport. For example, those who identify as female face a range of barriers associated with harassment, investment, and visibility which impacts on generations to come. Women are significantly more likely to impacted by gender-based violence than men, and sport is also impacted by this.
- 2.13 Sport Wales is aware that the number of women reporting harassment while exercising increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. [A Women In Sport survey](#) in February 2021 found that a large majority of girls (62%) said they were doing less physical activity during the pandemic than before, with only 19% reporting doing more. Many highlighted exercising in

public and fear of anyone being able to watch and criticise them as an issue. Over half of all girls (57%) said they feel self-conscious and judged when exercising outdoors and this was slightly higher for less active girls (65%).

- 2.14 The gender disparity associated with the financial and economic elements of sport is also significant. So too, is the lack of high-end marketing and promotion women receive. According to a 2018 [Statista report](#), women's sports receive only 0.4% of total sponsorships. This historical lack of exposure forces female sports out of the mainstream and removes women role models for future generations.
- 2.15 We know from the School Sport Survey that there is a distinct difference in participation levels across different genders, with that divergence emerging noticeably as children transition from primary to secondary education. One of the more prominent barriers relates to confidence. Whilst at primary school age the confidence of boys and girls is comparable (85% and 83% respectively) the gap is significantly wider at secondary level. (83% to 69%). Understanding this data is critical if we are to tailor the sport sector to meet the needs of women and girls. We can see therefore that there is a key role for the education sector to respond to this barrier to participation, ensuring that enjoyment and confidence are the forefront of delivering physical activity and wider sporting offers, both within the curriculum and as extracurricular opportunities. Confidence in this regard, also extends to the teaching profession's ability to deliver such activities, and the training they need to be able to do this in a person-centred way.
- 2.16 Sport Wales is pleased to collaborate with [The International Working Group](#) for Women in Sport in 2022-2026 to address some of these widespread challenges.
- 2.17 We believe in the power of sport in creating a safe, cohesive, and connected community for all people, and acknowledge that there are barriers to participation in sport faced by those who identify as LGBTQ+. Barriers such as discrimination, fear and reinforced stereotypes can be exacerbated when they intersect with poverty and/or disadvantage. Public health evidence tells us that the LGBTQ+ population are amongst the highest to experience mental ill health, and sport can be a powerful tool in supporting this. In 2017, we worked with a LGBT organisation in understanding these barriers to participation and, in line with the Welsh Government LGBTQ+ Action Plan, will be continuing to work to best understand participation and engagement amongst this community.

- 2.18 **Socio-economic status** – Consistently, the research we collect indicates that the lowest uptake of physical activity in sport is from those living in socio-economic disadvantage and that poverty and deprivation impacts early and sustained engagement in sport and physical activity.
- 2.19 The National Survey for Wales (2021-22) found 24% of households living in material deprivation participated in sporting activities three or more times a week (24% in material deprivation, 35% not in material deprivation).<sup>1</sup> This was reaffirmed in our recent polling surveys throughout 2021, which found those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were twice as likely as those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds to have done no exercise in the past week.<sup>2</sup> The survey also found those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were less likely to exercise to help manage their mental health (ABC1 – 70%; C2DE – 61%).<sup>3</sup>
- 2.20 Data collected from our School Sport Survey also demonstrates poverty or deprivation can impact engagement in sport and physical activity. In 2018, those with the highest level of free school meal eligibility were 9% more likely than their peers with low eligibility to do no frequent activity (31% low level of eligibility, 22% high level of eligibility). Further, the data shows that 42.2% of those with a high level of free school meal eligibility exercised three or more times a week, compared to 54.7% of those with low eligibility.
- 2.21 The School Sport Survey highlights the sliding scale of impact across elements of deprivation. It is evident that those from more deprived areas are less likely to be physically active than their counterparts in less deprived areas, and whilst the barriers observed in general terms (noted above) remain evident by all levels of deprivation (as noted utilising free school meal data), the issue of time is more prominent amongst those from less deprived communities.
- 2.22 Insight from the National Survey for Wales also indicates that households experiencing socio-economic deprivation are the least likely to be physically active, regardless of the health benefits. Our data indicates that those from under served, or more deprived communities see time, issues of cost and accessibility as key concerns or factors that impact on their engagement. Access to sport and physical activity in Wales, for those impacted by

---

<sup>1</sup> National Survey for Wales Results Viewer, 'Participation in sporting activities three or more times a week (FG indicator), by Household in material deprivation (FG indicator)' (2021-22).

<sup>2</sup> Sport Wales, ComRes Survey 4 - SocioEconomic, 'Participation' (August 2021), <<https://www.sport.wales/research-and-insight/comres-research/comres-survey-4-august-2021/socioeconomic/>> (accessed 28/01/22).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 'Values'.

poverty and deprivation is significant. 1 in 4 people in Wales live in poverty,<sup>4</sup> and 1 in 3 young people in Wales are growing up in poverty<sup>5</sup> and research by our partners - Street Games, tell us that families living in poverty, have as little as £3.21 to spend on sport and leisure every week.<sup>6</sup>

- 2.23 Across all socio-economic groups the factors of confidence, motivation and enjoyment are critical, and all groups recognise being able to be active with friends and in sporting opportunities that reflect their individuals interests as key elements to driving their activity levels. Sport Wales understands, from research by the British Medical Association and the WHO, that there is a connection between poverty and low levels of wellbeing. This can partly be explained due to the stresses associated with poverty<sup>7</sup> but essentially means that even though sport is recognised as an important element of wellbeing - it is not prioritised by certain population groups given other wider social and personal stressors.
- 2.24 **Disability** – There are a wide range of barriers which impact on participation in sport for those living with a disability. Access to facilities is one barrier including the way in which infrastructure is planned and designed. However, it is important to recognise that as with disabilities – not all barriers are visible. Poorly designed systems, including those which lie outside of sport can impact on the ability to engage in a sporting offer. A lack of suitable transport, or transport systems that do not align to the geographical location of sporting offers, is one example of this. Limited opportunities, a lack of knowledge and expertise, limited awareness and the wider identity of the sporting culture and landscape, can also impact on sport participation in this population group.
- 2.25 [Disability Rights UK](#) indicates that nearly half of all people living in poverty, is either a disabled person, or lives with a disabled person and, that disabled people face a higher cost of living and poorer health outcomes. National Survey for Wales data for 2019-20 found that 12% of people would be encouraged to do more sport if they '*didn't have a disability, illness, or injury that prevents me from taking part,*' evidencing that latent demand does exist within this cohort of the population. Sport can be a transformative medium in supporting

---

<sup>4</sup> Oxfam, 'Poverty in Wales', <<https://oxfamapps.org/cymru/poverty-in-wales/>> (accessed 28/01/22).

<sup>5</sup> Street Games, 'Family Engagement Project', <<https://network.streetgames.org/sites/default/files/Family%20Engagement%20Project.pdf>> (accessed 28/01/22).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> The British Medical Association (BMA), Health at a Price – Reducing the Impact of Poverty, (2017) <<https://www.bma.org.uk/media/2084/health-at-a-price-2017.pdf>>; the World Health Organisation, Breaking the Vicious Cycle Between Mental Health and Poverty, <[https://www.who.int/mental\\_health/policy/development/1\\_Breakingviciouscycle\\_Infosheet.pdf](https://www.who.int/mental_health/policy/development/1_Breakingviciouscycle_Infosheet.pdf)>



those living with a disability but must be considered as part of wider policy portfolio areas to be successful.

- 2.26 Barriers to children's participation remain constant from our data, when we examine, specific responses from those with a disability or impairment. However, it is clear that both time, and challenge of finding a sport which were appropriate to this cohort of students, were key factors in shaping their activity levels.
- 2.27 **Ethnicity** – we know that there are widespread barriers impacting on participation in sport from individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds in Wales. We assert that understanding levels of participation alone, will not make as much of a significant impact as understanding the lived experience of individuals and, by dismantling traditional systems that have allowed inequality to persist.
- 2.28 Historically, in 2009 the Carnegie Research Institute was commissioned to conduct a systematic review of the literature pertaining to the participation of black and minority ethnic communities in sport across the UK. The available evidence indicated that people from the communities identified were less likely to take part in sport or to get involved in sport as a volunteer, administrator or spectator. Whilst this UK-wide evidence was likely to be somewhat indicative of the situation in Wales, the study revealed a paucity of information relating specifically to the Welsh context.
- 2.29 Since the review, additional insight has been gained from research within Wales, such as the 'Mentor Allan Programme' and the School Sport Survey 2018. Echoing findings from the systematic review - our school sport survey analysis revealed that Asian/Asian British pupils and black/black British pupils were less likely to be regular participants in sport than white British and mixed race pupils. While we can't prove causation, the 2018 School Sport Survey showed a 3-percentage point increase in participation amongst 'Asian/Asian British' pupils since 2015 (the ethnic group with the lowest rates of participation), and a 7-percentage point increase amongst pupils identifying as 'Arab/Other'.
- 2.30 In addition to the above, Sport Wales has been involved in more recent work across the home nation Sport Councils to further understand the issues of racism and racial inequality that currently exist in sport, the key findings from this can be accessed [here](#).
- 2.31 At Sport Wales, we do not believe that addressing individual characteristics alone, via a series of siloed interventions, will make as much of an impact as compared with taking an

intersectional approach. Individuals who live in similar communities will face very different challenges driven by their social, cultural, and biological circumstances.

### **3. How clear a picture do we have of current participation levels in disadvantaged areas? Does the current data enable policy interventions to be effective?**

- 3.1 As a contributor of official statistics for the Welsh Government, Sport Wales draws on data and insight to guide what it does. We are an insight led organisation, and it is this approach that drives the range of our work, from investment to athlete development.
- 3.2 The National Survey for Wales involves around 12,000 people each year from across Wales and covers a wide range of topics. The survey has multiple partners including Sport Wales, Public Health Wales, and National Resources Wales. There are a range of physical activity and sport questions asked by different partners which create a rounded picture of activity levels across the country. Questions contributed by Sport Wales focus on sporting activities participated in across the population. These questions help gain an informed overview of the adult populations level of sporting activity and, where sample sizes allow - break this down into useful information by a range of demographic indicators.
- 3.3 The School Sport Survey is one the largest per capita opportunities in the world for young people to have their say on sport and physical activity. The last survey in 2018, gathered the views of over 125,000 young people from over 1000 schools. The survey ensures young people in Wales have a voice in sport and helps to inform partners from a range of sectors on young peoples' participation, demand, attitudes, and interest in sport. The survey also identifies the barriers that prevent children and young people from taking part and ensures sport is developed and delivered in a format that motivates children and young people. The survey helps us to make informed decisions about future investment and helps the sport sector to make the best use of their resources.
- 3.4 Through the School Sport Survey, we also aim to better understand, and tailor sport to the needs of young people who may live in areas of deprivation. Importantly, the survey utilises deprivation statistics in the form of those eligible for Free School Meals, to weight and provide geographical context to the survey.

3.5 We know from the School Sport Survey that there are a range of barriers which limit the participation of children in sport. The three most prominent responses which would encourage pupils to do more sport in the 2018 survey were:

- *'If I had more time...'*
- *'If clubs were easier to get to...'*
- *'If it were cheaper...'*

This demonstrates the need to create opportunities which are accessible, which create a community approach to engagement and that are driven by individual demand.

3.6 Capturing population level statistics is of enormous importance, however, so too is understanding the needs, motivations, and behaviours of individuals in relation to this data. This is why the School Sport Survey is of huge significance in understanding the landscape of sport in Wales. It is also the reason our organisation continues to seek out different ways to collect insight, reflective of the population of Wales.

3.7 At the start of the pandemic, we worked with Savanta ComRes to help initially understand the impact the pandemic has had, or was having, on activity levels. We quickly understood that aside from the specific questions we were asking in relation to the pandemic, this national activity tracking poll was a useful and informative addition to the population level surveillance surveys offered by the National Survey for Wales and School Sport Survey. This periodic snapshot, now in its 5<sup>th</sup> iteration, has helped to allow almost real time understanding of the impact of interventions for the sport sector to respond to. This proved increasingly important throughout the pandemic at a time the sector was responding to changing Covid-19 regulations, but also as we begin to plan longer-term it can help shape the new and innovative offers of sport.

3.8 The last iteration of this survey completed in February 2022 indicated:

- 82% of adults reported being well enough to exercise at this time. This is the lowest figure observed throughout the course of the pandemic (from a peak of 88% in May 2020).
- During this round of the survey almost a quarter of adults of adults (24%) reported that they had undertaken activity on 'no days' in the previous week. This is the highest figure observed via this survey at any point during the pandemic.
- The proportion of adults undertaking activity on '3 or more' days is also the lowest observed throughout the course of the pandemic, with less than half of adults (47%) reporting this level of activity during the week of the survey.

- Active adults were more likely to report being 'happy' and 'satisfied with their lives' than those who were less active.
- 29% of adults feel that the pandemic has positively impacted their exercise regime while, 42% disagree with this statement. Older adults, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and those with a longstanding condition or illness are the most likely to feel that the pandemic negatively impacted their exercise regime.
- 57% of adults reported that they were exercising to manage their *physical* health at this time – this is the lowest figure witnessed throughout the course of the pandemic (peak 71% in October 2020). Those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds and those with no longstanding physical or mental condition were more likely to say this.
- 53% of adults reported that they were exercising to manage their *mental* health at this time – this is the lowest figure witnessed throughout the course of the pandemic (peak 65% in August 2022). Younger adults, those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds and those with no longstanding physical or mental condition were more likely to say this.

A full break down of this iteration of the survey, as well as other iterations can be found on the Sport Wales website.

3.9 **Appendix 1** to this response, includes a high-level data snapshot of sport and participation in physical activity in Wales.

### **Other Evidence**

3.10 We are continually reviewing the impact of our community investment schemes to ensure they meet the needs of the people of Wales. Our Be Active Wales Fund, and recently piloted Crowdfunder, both have review mechanisms built into them which allow us to use this insight to drive future investment decisions.

3.11 As well as monitoring key quantitative data sets, such as the distribution of funding by percentages and total values - broken down by deprivation indicators, sport, and equality indicators, we also ask those who we invest in to reflect on the impact of our financial contribution on their communities via reflection logs and surveys. This provides a range of qualitative outputs including sharing of intelligence across sports and clubs, case studies and a broader understanding of what information sits behind the numbers, which ensures we are continually learning from the lived experiences of users of our community clubs.

- 3.12 For example, we have seen through our pilot project focused on community crowdfunding for sport, [A Place for Sport](#), that sport can be a catalyst for community cohesion. From the projects that Sport Wales has invested to date through this pilot have amplified that funding at a rate of 2.7, meaning community clubs are receiving £2.70 for every £1 of public investment. In total £149,290 has been raised from, community donations. These have come from 1,134 individuals, highlighting how community investments can not only provide opportunities for sport to take place but be used to engage communities on collaborative approaches.
- 3.13 The fund disproportionately targets deprived communities, with funding provided at a higher percentage to those clubs in the most deprived areas based on Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation data. This has proven a successful mechanism for funding distribution to those most in need.

#### **4. How should public funding be used to increase participation in disadvantaged areas?**

- 4.1 We are categorically unapologetic about the way we invest in Welsh sport, and are keen to learn, reflect and adapt when necessary. **Our new investment approach places inequality at the centre of how we use public funds.** You can read about our approach to investment [here](#).
- 4.2 We use a transparent, data driven approach to invest in National Governing Bodies of sport and geographical partners. We believe our investment into sport via this approach is innovative and groundbreaking.
- 4.3 It is correct for public interest to drive public investment. Our investment approach has changed to ensure it is fit for the future, and transparent to the people of Wales. We utilise insight from the School Sport Survey, the National Survey for Wales, Census data and other indicators, to ensure that where our investment is placed, reflects the size and scale of impact of our partners in supporting a more equal sport sector. Further, we have deliberately weighted this data to build in the need of those receiving public money, to ensure they are offering opportunities that are accessible and equitable. We have an investment approach that rewards partners best placed to impact on improving diversity in sport, across areas of deprivation, disability, ethnicity, and gender equality. We truly believe that public investment should be specifically used to increase opportunities for those more disadvantaged communities and groups, which is why our approach builds that into the system in the future.

- 4.4 We invest in National Partners via an application approach, asking those who apply to work in partnership with us how they intend on tackling inequalities. We are currently exploring how this approach will look in the future to ensure that those we work in partnership with are best placed, and best funded, to tackle inequalities through sport.
- 4.5 In addressing persistent inequality and barriers to sport participation; we assert that there are three key components to consider when spending public funds: **diversity of investment, diversity of opportunity** and **a Cross Sector Programme** to transform Wales into an active nation through visible commitment to the Vision for Sport in Wales.
- 4.6 **Diversity of investment** – in recent years we have reviewed the impact of how and where we invest (as above) to make the most impact on addressing inequalities.
- 4.7 **Diversity of opportunity** is a fundamental component to ensuring that people build lifelong habits to be active. This includes supporting opportunities to participate in multisport offers at a young age and, accelerating opportunities whereby sport is delivered in conjunction with another medium – such as the chance to volunteer or utilise the Welsh language.
- 4.8 We are proud to partner with the Urdd, which provides sport to many children and young people in Wales in conjunction with the Welsh language. We recognise that approach of the Urdd helps to build capability and capacity within the sport sector, promotes the opportunity to be active and facilitates young people making a positive contribution to their communities.
- 4.9 **A Cross-Sector Programme and Pledge** to consider sport and physical activity in all policies should be a key consideration for policy makers. Our data tells us that single interventions alone, will not make a significant impact to the promotion of and participation in sport and physical activity. Providing opportunities for people to be active, should not just be the sole responsibility of the sport sector and should not be restricted to just sport based initiatives.
- 4.10 One example of cross sector work is the way in which sport is currently considered as part of the Healthy Weight Healthy Wales Strategy. Embedding physical activity as a key component within this strategy; and resourcing Sport Wales to accelerate this, is a positive step. It should be emphasised however, that recognition and adequate resourcing for sport within initiatives such as these is essential. We think a cross sector pledge, in line with the Vision for Sport in Wales will ensure that sport is recognised for the range of positive outputs it can drive, and that the sport sector is recognised and valued.

4.11 One issue we should also keep in focus is the unique power of sport to engage people from disadvantaged areas and bring local communities together. Whilst public funding should be focused on increasing participation in disadvantaged areas to enhance the numbers taking part in sport, it should also be an investment in health outcomes, crime prevention, community cohesion, skills development, and education attainment. Sport has an exceptional role in delivering multiple policy outcomes and should be considered as such when a range of public investments are considered. A siloed approach to sport funding delivering sporting opportunities will always curtail the wider social impacts that otherwise could be achieved.

## **5. How effective are current interventions at increasing participation in disadvantaged areas?**

5.1 Sport Wales has undertaken and commissioned a wide range of research to advance our understanding of why engagement in sport continues to vary so significantly across our population. Through our research, five themes consistently come up. We call these five themes the 'Elements of Engagement'.

5.2 The five Elements of Engagement are:

- 1) Motivation
- 2) Confidence
- 3) Awareness
- 4) Opportunity and Resources
- 5) The Experience

5.3 Sport Wales believes that the most effective interventions, are those which embody and support the elements of engagement, and those that work to support as many elements as possible – are more likely to be successful in the long term.

5.4 Sport Wales is always working to better understand how communities access sport and physical activity, and how access to sport can be improved for all people. In line with our strategic intents and the Vision for Sport, we are seeking to ensure sport and physical activity is accessible to everyone for the long term, and that we are person-centred, with individual needs leading the delivery and design of our sporting offer. We work to ensure that projects we support address the 5 elements of engagement. Two examples of these include:

## Creating Active Education Settings

- The Welsh Government has funded our pilot project to develop 'Active Education Settings Beyond the School Day.' Active Education Settings are schools which open their facilities to their pupils and communities, before, during, after the school day, in the evenings and during the summer holidays.
- By opening the quality facilities which are accessible to communities, but often locked away after 3pm, we believe communities will have increased access to a quality sporting offer which is in their local area, affordable, and engaging, enabling them to improve their mental and physical health by engaging in sport and physical activity.
- Active Education Settings will address key elements of engagement for children and young people, providing quality experiences, opportunities for engaging in sport, and the motivation to stay after school to 'do' sport, encouraging a preventative approach and enhancing physical literacy across communities.

## Developing Sports Partnerships

- Through Sport Partnerships we are planning for future generations by taking steps to prevent inequalities in participation in sport and physical activity across Wales.
- Tasked with bringing about system change they will be the catalyst to tackling 2 long standing issues
  - Ensuring there is the right support and opportunities in place for those who are not regularly physically active with a clear focus on removing barriers for those who need the most help.
  - Taking steps to meet the high latent demand from those who are active but want to do much more.
- A Sport Partnership will bring together key stakeholders within a defined region who understand the importance and have a focus on delivering the benefits sport and physical activity. As the World Health Organisation has argued, ***"to accelerate progress, recover from the impact of COVID-19 and unlock the full potential of physical activity, we must come together in strong partnerships to affect change."***<sup>8</sup>
- They will be led by insight and provide strategic leadership and planning at a regional level, with a common purpose that at a local level, everyone has equal access to sport and physical activity through a range of opportunities that best meet their needs.

---

<sup>8</sup> World Health Organisation, Fair Play: Building a strong physical activity system for more active people, 2021. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-HEP-HPR-RUN-2021.1>



## **6. Has the pandemic caused any persistent changes to participation levels in disadvantaged areas?**

- 6.1 The inequalities of sporting activity during the pandemic were shown clearly by our ComRes polling throughout 2020-2021. During the strict lockdown period, people from lower socio-economic backgrounds were much more likely to have reported a drop in their physical activity levels. In addition, people who reported their children were not doing any physical activity or exercise on a typical day was 9% but this rose to 14% for children from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- 6.2 Ongoing iterations, including our most recently completed polling in February 2022 can be found on the Sport Wales website, and in point 3.8 above.
- 6.3 In summary: older adults, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and those with a long-standing condition or illness were persistently more likely to report doing less activity than they were before the pandemic.

## **7. How effectively do different sectors (e.g. education and health) collaborate to improve participation in sport in disadvantaged areas?**

- 7.1 We recognise that in recent years, there has been an impactful shift in sport and physical activity working collaboratively with other sectors. Our work attached to Healthy Weight; Healthy Wales and with Education colleagues in piloting pupils being active beyond the school day are two examples of this. We do believe - this could go further.
- 7.2 We think creating an opportunity for sport to be considered within other budget areas could be one method of recognising its importance and demonstrating a cross sector approach to this.
- 7.3 Investment into physical activity offers, via other portfolios is critical not only in terms of ensuring a shift in funding approach towards preventative, long-term and sustainable outcomes, but also in terms of increasing the priority of the nation's wellbeing. As shown by the [New Zealand approach](#), establishing wellbeing as a national marker for success can ensure collective action. This shift is focused on building a resilient Wales capable of emerging from a pandemic in a different, innovative, and proactive way, rather than one simply reacting to the challenges it has presented.

7.4 In 2018, we commissioned a study, undertaken by Sheffield Hallam University which confirmed that sport contributes £3.428bn in social return on investment to Wales, including £295.17m in health outputs alone. With every £1 invested in sport there is a £2.88 return, both creating social and economic value for Wales, and increasing the capacity of the NHS.

**8. Are there examples of best practice, both within Wales and internationally, that Wales should learn from to increase participation in sport in disadvantaged areas?**

- 8.1 There are four key opportunities whereby we think Wales could be world leading in addressing the complexities within this area. Much of this we are already doing and in part, is based on international best practice. Currently however, much of this is being advocated for, and delivered by sport alone. We think, cross-sector support for these will be transformative.
- 8.2 Supporting the development of **Sport Partnerships** to transform the way sport is delivered at local community level – *informed by the New Zealand approach*. We believe the impact Sport Partnerships will have in transforming the way in which sport is delivered locally will be transformative.
- 8.3 Accelerating **Wales Person Centred Approach** to sport when we talk about Welsh sport on the world stage – *a similar model has been adopted in Norway*.
- 8.4 A commitment to models which promote being **Active Beyond the School Day** and opening of school facilities after hours for community use – *multiple international models*. As mentioned in 5.4 we believe that opening facilities which are accessible to communities, but often locked away after 3pm, will facilitate communities having increased access to a quality sporting offer which is in their local area, affordable, and engaging.
- 8.5 Support for **Sport in All Polices** with recognition of this in cross sector budgets – *similar to the Health in All Polices commitment (Wales) and Wellbeing Budget Marker (New Zealand)*.

## Appendix 1 - High-level Data Snapshot:

### Participation & Demand

- The number of people participating in a sporting activity three times a week or more is a national indicator for the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015.
  - 48% of children in years 3-11 participate in extracurricular sport three or more times per week<sup>9</sup>
  - Only 32% of adults hit this target<sup>10</sup>
- Nearly half (49%) of adults would like to do more sport or physical activity<sup>2</sup>

### Diversity

- There are consistent gender differences in participation
  - 28% of women take part in sport three or more times per week compared to 36% of men<sup>2</sup>
  - 46% of girls take part in sport three or more times per week compared to 50% of boys – only 37% of those who didn't identify as male or female meet this threshold<sup>1</sup>
- In children, the groups with the highest levels of participation are<sup>1</sup>:
  - Pupils in year 5 and 6 (51%)
  - Mixed/multiple ethnicity pupils (52%)
  - FSM1 pupils (55%)
  - Fluent Welsh speaking pupils (57%)
- For adults, the most recent ComRes survey found that the groups most likely to report 'no activity' were<sup>11</sup>:
  - Women (18%)
  - Adults from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (22%)
  - Those aged 55+ (23%)

### Key Challenge Areas

- 59% of adults in Wales are overweight, and with nearly a quarter (22.6%) of the adult population classified as obese<sup>12</sup>
- Over a quarter (27.1%) of children in Wales are overweight or obese, and 12.4% are obese.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> SSS 2018 - <https://www.sport.wales/files/9964220f5a090ea6753e7e09b6280379.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> NSW 2019/20 - <https://www.sport.wales/files/68cfd5f42d91edc2241a73c2258eee0.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> ComRes Wave 4 – August 2021 - <https://www.sport.wales/research-and-insight/comres-research/comres-survey-4-august-2021/>

<sup>12</sup> PHW 2019 - <https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/observatory/data-and-analysis/publication-documents/obesity-2019/obesity-in-wales-report-2018-pdf-english/>

- Only 17% of young people meet the physical activity recommendations of at least 60 minutes a day <sup>13</sup>
- 41% of adults haven't participated in any sporting activity in the previous four weeks (41%).<sup>2</sup>
- More than half (52%) of children sit for more than 4 hours per day in their free time on weekdays. <sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> SHRN 2019/20 - [https://www.shrn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/SHRN-NR-FINAL-23\\_03\\_21-en-AMENDED06.08.21.pdf](https://www.shrn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/SHRN-NR-FINAL-23_03_21-en-AMENDED06.08.21.pdf)