



FAW written response to the inquiry into participation in sport in disadvantaged areas

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?*

The School Sport Survey (2018) highlighted participation rates amongst the most and least deprived children had increased to 13% and the National survey for Wales (2017) found that households from deprived areas were 10% less likely to take part in sport. Differing participation levels are compounded by significant intersectionality amongst under-represented groups.

We already know that females are already less likely to be physically active than their male counterparts, which is compounded by the fact 52.1% of those living in the 10% most deprived areas of Wales are female. Black Asian Minority Ethnic people are more than twice as likely to live in the 10% most deprived areas of Wales, than white people with over 1 in 10 people living in the 10% most deprived areas coming from ethnic minority groups, despite only making up 5% of the total population in Wales. People who are disabled are more likely to live in the 10% most deprived areas than people who are not disabled with disabled people making up 1 in 3 of all people living in these areas.

The main barrier to participation within these communities is access to opportunities. Accessibility can cover a broad range of areas such as choice, affordability, travel, kit and equipment and ensuring appropriate facilities are available within the communities. Another significant barrier is confidence which is heavily influenced by a sense of belonging and having national and local role models that individuals can relate to.

How clear a picture do we have of current participation levels in disadvantaged areas?

We currently have over 100,000 registered players playing regularly through our network of 953 clubs and many more playing recreationally. Through our Football Management system, we monitor levels of participation by age, gender, ethnicity, local authority, town and postcode which enables us to track levels of activity across every community in Wales.

Comparing the ten most deprived areas of Wales against the ten least deprived based on WIMD, more players are playing football in the most deprived areas of Wales than in the least deprived. The player representation is identical, with both category areas having 87% male and 13% female players, which is reflective of the national average. This data highlights how accessible football is across Welsh communities and reinforces the important role our 19,000 strong volunteers play in ensuring opportunities are provided to players from all communities and of all ages. Whilst this highlights football's position as one of the most accessible sports in Wales, more can and should be done to ensure people from all communities can access opportunities to play sport.

Does the current data enable policy interventions to be effective?

Through use of our own and Sport Wales/Welsh Government data and insight, we are targeted with our approach in developing and providing opportunities in areas of need and identify priority groups or geographical areas that require additional investment, support, or specific activities to ensure we positively impact on levels of participation across all communities. Our Huddle programme, as an example, identifies locations of Huddle centres based on football participation and low physical activity levels amongst young girls 5 – 11. Working with community organisations, these centres are established in communities that require proactive intervention to increase participation levels across a specific group. Our Huddle centres provide opportunities for over 1000 girls across Wales to play football at little or no cost.



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How should public funding be used to increase participation in disadvantaged areas?

The FAW believe public funding should be used to ensure more and better sports facilities are developed and established in disadvantaged communities to remove barriers associated with accessibility. Funding should be utilised to ensure they are available at low cost to ensure the whole community can access these facilities with a specific focus on protecting access for under-represented groups to ensure the investment is maximised on individuals less likely to be physically active. The FAW has recently allocated £1.4m of Welsh Government and UK Government funding to facility projects in areas of deprivation (WIMD). However, the facility needs across communities in Wales are much greater than the investment currently available and we risk falling even further behind England, Scotland and Ireland if levels of investment into sports facilities aren't increased significantly.

How effective are current interventions at increasing participation in disadvantaged areas?

The work of the FAW and our partner clubs and community organisations are particularly effective in increasing participation amongst disadvantaged areas. By ensuring activities are available locally, at low cost and are designed to attract target groups participants from disadvantaged areas are able to access football opportunities on a regular basis. However, too often, interventions are based on short-term funding programmes, which impact the longevity and sustainability of any behaviour change within these communities. Whilst the change and impact of these interventions are initially positive, if the funding is removed, following a policy change or culmination of a government programme, the impact is often lost alongside some trust among community members and organisations.

As an example, the FAW are reliant on annual funding from Sport Wales which does not enable a long-term planning approach to address community needs. In addition, Sport Wales have outlined that investment into football, the most participated team sport in Wales by some distance, may be reduced by as much as 27% from April 2023. This will have a hugely negative impact on our ability to address inequalities and increase opportunities and investment in disadvantaged areas.

Has the pandemic caused any persistent changes to participation levels in disadvantaged areas?

We have seen a significant growth in participation levels following the pandemic. As highlighted previously, participation levels in football are currently higher in the most deprived communities compared with the least deprived communities. However, we have also seen significant growth across the country in the number of women and girls (46% increase), junior boys (over 6500 new players) and senior men (13% increase) playing football regularly.

Whilst football remains one of the most affordable and accessible sports in Wales, we recognise that COVID-19 and more recently the rise in the cost of living has compounded existing inequalities in communities across Wales, impacting the earnings of the poorest households the most. We have recently launched our PAWB fund as a long-term mechanism to ensure families from low socio-economic backgrounds can access new, or continue to access, football opportunities to safeguard the benefits of football on the wellbeing of children and young people. The fund, established in September 2021 and self-funded by the FAW, has already awarded over £8000 to support over 100 families with kit, equipment, membership fees and travel costs.

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

There are often too many instances of sectors working in silos and duplication of resources and efforts to achieve similar goals. There is a need to further promote the benefits of sport and physical activity to change policy and investment in order to maximise the opportunity to utilise sport and physical



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activity to act as a preventative tool to ensure our communities are healthier, safer and more prosperous.

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

Female Football Hub - The FAW has invested in the development of a 3G complex, located in 10% of the most deprived areas of Wales, that has protected and dedicated access for women and girls on evenings and weekends. The facility has established a steering group, including representatives from all female user groups, to lead the usage of the facility and has been branded to highlight female role models and champions to support participants' confidence and sense of belonging.

Grange Gardens - A small-sided 3G pitch developed as a legacy of Cardiff hosting the Champions League, located in 20% of the most deprived areas of Wales, provides open access for the whole community to play football on a turn up and play basis ensuring the facility is accessible to all.