

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#) ar [Cefnogi pobl sydd â chyflyrau cronig](#)

This response was submitted to the [Health and Social Care Committee](#) consultation on [supporting people with chronic conditions](#).

CC37: Ymateb gan: | Response from: Chwaraeon Cymru / Sport Wales



HSCS Committee Consultation – Sport Wales Response

**Supporting people with
chronic conditions**

1. Sport Wales Response to the Health and Social Care Committee's inquiry into chronic conditions.

Overview

1. Sport Wales welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Health and Social Care Committee's inquiry into Chronic Conditions and recognises the challenges facing those people in Wales who suffer from chronic conditions.
2. Sport Wales believes that sports and physical activity can play a key role in supporting people with long term, physical and mental health problems.
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. The Welsh Government recently reaffirmed its role in delivering this vision with Sport Wales and the sector at the Sport Summit held in Cardiff. The Vision is the platform for cross-sector engagement in sport and physical activity and was co-produced with a wide range of stakeholders to represent the voice of the people of Wales. It is our collective vehicle for transforming Wales into a truly active nation; and we consider the impact that sport can have on supporting physical and mental health as a key part of this. We would be happy to discuss more on The Vision for Sport in Wales with the Committee and the role it has to play in supporting the health and wellbeing of the people of Wales.
4. Results from the [National Survey for Wales](#) shows that those who participate in sport and physical activity three or more times a week are more likely to have more healthy lifestyle behaviours.
5. The National Survey for Wales also shows that those with a longstanding illness, disability or infirmity are less likely to participate in sport or physical activity, however their level of demand to participate is similar to the national average. Barriers are therefore more likely related to confidence, a lack of opportunities to participate and having sufficient resources.
6. This data suggests that people with multiple conditions would likely have lower rates of participation in sport than those with one condition or none. Material deprivation (and age) are also compounding factors to the issue and would be associated with even lower rates of participation in sport and physical activity.
7. Sport Wales data relates to the provision, access and enjoyment of sport and physical activity of people of all ages in all areas of Wales. We believe our research and insight can support the committee by developing its understanding of the benefits of engaging in sport and physical activity across the broad spectrum of physical and mental health.

8. According to the ['Social Return on Investment of Sport in Wales 2016/17' report](#) - produced by Sport Wales alongside Sheffield Hallam University, the social value of improved health is £295.17m.

Data also shows that Sport participants are 14.1% more likely to (self) report good health than non-participant which results in a) reduced GP visits and b) reduced psychotherapy service usage.

Sport Wales have commissioned a new version of this work which will report later this year and will happily share this with the committee.

9. Sport Wales also teams up with Savanta to get an insight into the nation's activity habits and behaviours. Put in place to track activity levels during the Coronavirus pandemic, the 'Wales Activity Tracker' has continued regularly to check activity levels in Wales.

The surveys, now run quarterly, provide a snapshot on physical activity and sport, as well as the attitude of people in Wales towards exercise.

The data has been weighted to be demographically representative of Welsh adults 16+ by gender, age and the estimated households with children under 16.

The latest wave of the survey – [Wave 8](#) – ran in April 2023 and some highlighted data relevant to this inquiry includes:

- 25% of adults who have **any** longstanding conditions or illnesses **had not** participated in 30+ minutes of sport any days of the week, compared to 14% of those with **no** longstanding health implications.
- Furthermore, 30% of adults living with a longstanding **physical** condition or illness **had not** participated in 30+ minutes of sports all week, compared to 22% of those who have a longstanding **mental** condition or illness, and 14% of adults who have **no** longstanding health implications.
- Adults who have **no** longstanding health implications were more likely to participate in 30+ minutes of sport or physical activity 2-4 days a week than those who have **any** longstanding conditions or illnesses (51%-43%).
- Adults who have a longstanding **physical** condition or illness were the least likely to have participated in physical activity 2-4 days a week:
 - Longstanding mental condition or illness – 49%
 - Longstanding physical condition or illness – 39%
 - No longstanding health implications – 51%

10. The impact of the cost-of-living increase has been well documented on people's ability to participate in sport. Recent data from the Wales Activity Tracker suggests that this has a bigger impact on people with longstanding health and mental health difficulties.

- The cost-of-living increase has negatively impacted 49% of those with longstanding **mental** conditions or illnesses, compared to 37% of people with longstanding **physical** conditions and illnesses and 36% of those with **no** longstanding health implications.
- Those with a longstanding **mental** condition or illness did less sport and physical activity due to changes in the cost-of-living than any of the other groups:
 - Longstanding mental condition or illness – 48%
 - Longstanding physical condition or illness – 27%
 - No longstanding health implications – 28%

11. In this consultation response we will focus on three key areas where we believe sport and physical activity can support people suffering with chronic conditions.

In line with the terms of reference we will focus our response on:

- Prevention and early intervention
- Mental Health
- Ageing population

Sport and physical activity have a significant role to play in supporting people's physical and mental wellbeing and we would like to see this recognised across the services which are available for people living with any chronic condition.

Prevention and lifestyle

- *Action to improve prevention and early intervention (to stop people's health and wellbeing deteriorating).*

Sport Wales recognises the importance of improving prevention and early intervention to stop people's health and wellbeing deteriorating. The Vision for Sport seeks to transform Wales into an active nation where everyone can have a lifelong enjoyment of Sport. Sport and physical activity have an important role in supporting the health and wellbeing of a population, and if placed centrally to preventative health measures, can be a conduit to longevity and overall wellbeing.

One significant change that Sport Wales has recently introduced is the implementation of our new investment strategy. Funding decisions are now taken based on participation and demand for sports, heavily weighted towards the views of children and young people. Furthermore, the data used also utilises demographic data for young people on disability, deprivation, race and gender to prioritise the financial allocation.

We have taken a Future Generations approach of investing in early childhood experiences as the evidence shows that creating sustainable, lifelong sporting habits is a key driver in the preventative health agenda. Whilst sporting opportunities as a treatment for ill-health can be incredibly effective, utilising social prescribing and health funding for health prevention will maximise impact at a much higher rate.

We contributed to the Welsh Government's social prescribing framework consultation, and we await the publication of the feedback analysis report and supporting work programme with interest.

We would like to see sport and physical activity placed at the heart of a preventative framework which supports people to live full and healthy lives.

Critically, we would like to understand how our partners can be supported to deliver interventions that will help people who are referred to them. It needs to be recognised that many sports, clubs and movements which will be most beneficial to supporting the health of people with chronic conditions are staffed by volunteers.

This means that the codes of practice and the link up to primary care must be innovative to ensure that these volunteers have the support and guidance to in turn support those referred through their journey.

Someone with a chronic mental health condition such as anxiety or depression will need very different support from someone who has a developing heart condition, and should they be referred to a session run by a volunteer, the volunteer may need training or reference materials to ensure they can adequately meet the needs of the person.

This could be a barrier to successful social prescribing and it is one we would like to see efforts to overcome. We wish people to be empowered to access and use sport for their wellbeing.

As part of the Welsh Government's interventions through the Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales action plans we have been pleased to work with our partners to deliver programmes which are evidence of good social prescribing. We would like to highlight the 'Daily Active' initiative being developed, the 'Children and Families Programme' and the 60+ active leisure scheme (ALS) in relation to the remaining parts of the committee's terms of reference.

These programmes have clear potential to link into social prescribing initiatives and could play a nationwide role in prevention and early intervention. There are also cross cutting themes which would be beneficial to a forthcoming mental health strategy.

DAILY ACTIVE:

Summary

Daily Active is a multi-agency initiative between Sport Wales, Natural Resources Wales, Public Health Wales and Welsh Government that has been developed to promote a whole-school approach to physical activity, which will shape a revised and refreshed approach for schools. It will be an integrated part of a reviewed and renewed Welsh Network of Healthy Schools Scheme from Autumn 2023.

Daily Active aims to increase the levels of physical activity across all young people and therefore improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people across Wales.

This is not a specific programme, but an approach which encapsulates the opportunities where physical activity can be delivered across the school day, providing a package of support to facilitate them to develop a tailored plan for their school based on insights and pupil feedback.

The Daily Active approach will be a core component of the Welsh Network for Healthy School Schemes. It will be one of a series of thematic frameworks agreed across organisations working to support schools. It will work seamlessly with the World Health Organization's Health Promoting Schools approach and enable schools to deep dive into areas they have identified as priorities based on the needs of their school.

The Daily Active will be a large-scale public health intervention which we, as agencies, believe will support long-term healthy behaviours and ensure that children view physical activity as the norm in their day.

Public Health Wales' data released this year, [Report on the 2022 School Environment Questionnaire for the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes](#) shows that when asked to list the four biggest barriers to learning progression as the result of the pandemic, schools most commonly reported challenges with pupils' mental health (80%) – Sport Wales believes that programmes such as Daily Active can play a crucial role in improving young people's physical and mental health.

We hope that the approach of the Daily Active will ensure children experience improved physical and mental health, confidence, educational outcomes and social skills.

Children and Families Programme (Collaborative sports opportunities with National Governing Bodies (NGBs) aimed at families with children)

Summary and Policy Context

The Welsh Government's [Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales strategy](#) seeks to prevent and reduce obesity in Wales by driving forward four key themes by 2030: Leadership and Enabling Change, Healthy Environments, Healthy Settings & Healthy People. The strategy recognises the contribution sport has to play to this aim and seeks to ensure sport and recreation opportunities are more accessible. Current [Chief Medical Officer \(CMO\) guidelines](#) recommend that children aged between 5 to 18 years should engage in moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity for an average of at least 60 minutes per day across the week. This can include physical education, active travel, after-school activities, play and sport. Adults (aged 19 to 64 years) should aim to be physically active every day and accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity.

What we know from research

It is well known that physical activity levels influence weight and health outcomes. However, physical inactivity and rising obesity levels are an ongoing problem in the UK. In Wales, the 2018 Child Measurement Programme run by Public Health Wales reported that one in four children are overweight or obese.

The CMO highlights evidence that suggests physical activity levels track from childhood into adulthood. By ensuring children are as active as possible, this has a positive knock-on effect for the health and wellbeing of the future population.

Indeed, the importance of the family in promoting and achieving healthy and active children, as well as providing familial socialisation has been widely reported. The 'Children and families pre programme insight' undertaken by UK RCS (*RCS: Research, consultancy & strategy for public services*) notes that children's physical activity levels are heavily influenced by their parents, particularly younger children who tend to spend more time with their parents. Researchers also found that increases in joint parent-child physical activity may also be an effective method for increasing activity levels of both parents and children.

The study also showed that it is paramount that parent's physical activity levels are increased as this will in turn influence a child's activity levels. Equally, studies have concluded that replacing the time that parents and children spend together in sedentary pursuits with joint physical activity could have clear health benefits.

Overall, we know that:

1. Physical activity levels have an effect on weight and health outcomes.
2. Many children in Wales aren't active enough, particularly those from low socio-economic backgrounds.
3. The physical activity rates of parents have an effect on the physical activity rates of their children.

Considering the policy context and research presented above we are undertaking this intervention for two reasons consistent with our desired outcomes:

Sport Wales will support families with children in Wales to be more active and therefore lead healthier lives. We will also build the knowledge base from which to learn and improve and advocate for the power of sport and physical activity.

Potential Outcomes

Sport Wales want to see families with children in Wales being more active and therefore leading healthier lives. We want to see families accessing collaborative sport opportunities involving National Governing Bodies. Sport Wales also sees opportunities emerging from the programme which include gaining a stronger knowledge base from which to learn and improve and having a stronger knowledge base to advocate for the power of sport.

What are our Success measures?

- The development and delivery of a national physical activity scheme that targets the Health Inequalities of the 60+ population and has buy in from all partners.
- The provision of a range of physical activity opportunities that meet the needs of the local population with a particular focus on young families.
- Learning to inform future approaches to increase the physical activity levels of families in the three target areas.
- A long-term commitment to the funding of a physical activity intervention for this target population a key contributor to the Healthy Weight Healthy Wales Strategy.

Sport Partnerships

Regional Sport Partnerships are aiming to be a game changer for future generations, transforming the way community sport is created, delivered, led and funded. This is because we are encouraging sectors to collaborate on delivering sport and physical activity across a region. These regions match the Well-being of Future Generations Act Regional Partnership Board areas and therefore the agencies which work together should already be able to liaise and ensure that the benefits of sport are seen across the area. In North Wales, where Actif North Wales is already in operation, we can see that universities, local authorities, housing associations and the health board are committed to working together to deliver a healthier, happier North Wales.

The partnerships are designed to overcome ongoing and stubborn inequalities in participation in sport and physical activity.

We would like to see any future work programme on social prescribing acknowledge and work with the local sport partnership to ensure partners work cohesively and effectively on delivering meaningful interventions for preventative and long-term health outcomes.

Impact of additional factors

- *(Ageing population) The extent to which services will have the capacity to meet future demand with an ageing population.*
- *The impact of the rising cost-of-living on people with chronic conditions in terms of their health and wellbeing*

Ageing Population:

The physical activity benefits for adults and older adults are well documented (<https://www.gov.wales/physical-activity-benefits-adults-and-older-adults>).

Sport and physical activity have multiple benefits for those over 60, from social opportunities to ensuring strength and mobility in older adults, as well as rehabilitation for any chronic conditions people are living with.

Sport Wales' work with the 60+ community is varied and wide-ranging. During the pandemic we teamed up with the sector and national organisations to provide advice and guidance as to how older adults could stay active at home – to protect their mental and physical health. We have also provided older adults with access to sport and physical activity through the free-swimming initiative.

An example of the impact of Sport Wales's work with the 60+ community can be seen below:

Sport Wales 60+ Active Leisure Scheme

Sport Wales worked with the Welsh Government to develop an over 60's Active Leisure Scheme as part of the Healthy Weight Healthy Wales (HWHW) Action Plan. The aim was to develop a national leisure offer for over 60s to encourage physical activity and healthy lifestyle choices; a targeted approach to reduce health inequalities and social isolation.

We have seen a significant increase in engagement from local authorities coordinating with other initiatives such as The National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS), Free Swimming Initiative (FSI), Social Prescribing and Age Well networks as well as other local 60+ provision to provide a menu of opportunities for this population. In addition, there is scope to further extend the reach of the programme.

In December 2022, we received detailed case studies from 20 Local Authorities showcasing the impact and successes of the scheme – one which has been adapted below and shows the wider impact of participating in physical activity can have on the physical and mental health of people aged 60 and above. We have also learnt further lessons from partners about the groups and communities that may benefit from the scheme in future.

Seven of the key recommendations from the final evaluation report were:

- Clarify the desired outcomes of the scheme regarding success and sustainability.
- Prioritise scheme promotion and uptake in target groups. To promote scheme delivery.
- The social component of the scheme should be emphasised to all potential participants.
- Encourage the use of a greater range of settings beyond leisure centres.
- Promote the 60+ Scheme as an alternative to, or follow on from, the National Exercise Referral Scheme. To improve collaboration and consistency.
- Address inconsistencies in reporting of engagement rates.
- Sharing of knowledge on the barriers and facilitators to engage currently inactive individuals.

We have numerous case studies available which highlight the positive impact that sport and physical activity has on people aged 60+. One such example has been documented below:

Case Study (Pickleball)

Kath Knowles is a breast cancer survivor who picked up Pickleball when moving to Ynys Mon in 2018 and has worked closely with staff at Ynys Mon Leisure centres to grow the sport to around 200 players across the island, thanks to the Actif Mon 60+ scheme.

Kath was exercising in one of the leisure centres as part of her physical recovery when she became unwell. The staff at the centre called an ambulance and Kath was transferred to hospital where she underwent cardiac surgery following a heart attack.

Following the event, Kath resumed exercise and has been a keen advocate of the area's ALS 60+, promoting all forms of exercise to all that would benefit. She recruits friends and family members to help get them active or keep them active, often citing her own experience when people say they do not like sport or are not fit enough.

Kath has also gone on to win medals at almost 72 years of age at the English Nationals, Dutch Open, German Open and Cambridge International team tournament.

Kath is keen to encourage as many people as possible to get active and “learn this easy sport to bring laughter, love, and social interaction into their lives. It is the most diverse, fun sport I have ever played and is suitable for age groups 8-90 years regardless of ability or indeed disability.”

Multiple Conditions

- *The ability of NHS and social care providers to respond to individuals with multimorbidity rather than focusing on single conditions in isolation.*
- *The interaction between mental health conditions and long-term physical health conditions.*

We understand that sport and physical activity is only one part of a person's experience of interventions and the health and care system when they have a chronic or multiple difficulties), and that the ability for services to link up to treat the person and not the difficulties is key. However, we do urge policy makers to ensure the role of sport and physical activity is further embedded in health outcomes. Nations such as the Netherlands see sport as integral to its delivery of health and quality of life for all through their ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport.

As pointed out by the Senedd's Health and Social Care Committee's report into mental health inequalities **“the key for tackling poor mental health is connection”**. Therefore, Sport Wales adopts a relational approach to understanding and supporting mental health.

This is a key outcome that Sport Wales would like to see achieved. We strive to ensure sport supports better connections and promotes positive environments for all people to thrive in. We believe sport and physical activity has a key role in delivering better outcomes for mental health.

We recognise the role of the Mental Health delivery plan in improving wellbeing and mental health in Wales and believe sport and physical activity should be considered as part of a package of holistic responses to experiences of distress. We hope to see a renewed plan brought forward which will employ physical activity and sport as a means of ensuring the nations resilience to overcome the difficulties they may experience throughout life which can cause distress.

We also believe the application of a joined-up preventative approach which employs sport and physical activity could go some way to addressing mental health inequalities and support people who report mental health difficulties alongside long-term physical health conditions.

However, we recognise the complexity of human behaviour and experience, and understand individuals may require holistic interventions, care and support over a longer period.

The individuals and communities particularly affected by mental health inequalities are also at risk of lower engagement in sport and physical activity, so a joined-up approach to social prescribing, and creating positive and unchallenging environments for people to engage in sport and physical activity when they are unwell is required.

The latest 'Wales Activity Tracker' data shows a continued trend of people being physically active to primarily support their mental health. Just under three in five (58%) say they exercise to help manage their mental health, which is an increase of 5% compared to May 2022.

Final Overview

We welcome the committee's inquiry on chronic conditions and hope we can further support the committee as the inquiry develops by sharing any additional data or insight which could improve their understanding of how sport and physical activity can impact people and communities in Wales.

We note how it is highly likely that people with multiple conditions would likely have lower rates of participation in sport than those with one condition or none, but believe sport and physical activity could have an important role to play in supporting people suffering with chronic conditions to live well with their condition, prevent further deterioration and take some pressure off NHS and care services.

We are working across the sector to address inequalities in sport and physical activity in line with the Vision for Sport in Wales, as well as increasing the amount of data and insight we hold in relation to mental health, poverty and deprivation to ensure we are constantly learning and improving.

Sport Wales's key aspirations for sport used as social prescribing are:

- Sport is seen as a key part of any healthcare and preventative journey for people with any physical or mental ill health.
- That our partners are not overwhelmed by requests to take on people on social prescribing programmes.
- That partner's volunteers and staff are upskilled and supported to support people who are referred.

We would also like to see the mental health delivery plan updated and sport included, as well as the social prescribing framework's workplan to heavily involve sport.

We understand the provision of sporting activities and opportunities, and our commitment to creating cohesive, safe communities where people can meet and exercise with others will be crucial, in our view, to address physical and mental health inequalities and access sport sustainably in the long term.

Sport must make up a part of a collaborative policy response to the challenge of improving people's physical and mental health in Wales. Such a response should be informed by insight and research relating to lived experiences, encourage preventative measures, encapsulate need, care and support for individuals and communities, and include the ambitious aim to provide all people with the tools they need to prevent and recover from periods of ill health in a sustainable manner over the long term.