

Paper 3

National Assembly for Wales

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Inquiry into participation levels in sport in Wales

Response from : Welsh Local Government Association

# Inquiry into Participation Levels in Sport in Wales

31<sup>st</sup> May 2013



## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the 22 local authorities in Wales, and the three national park authorities, the three fire and rescue authorities, and four police authorities are associate members.
2. It seeks to provide representation to local authorities within an emerging policy framework that satisfies the key priorities of our members and delivers a broad range of services that add value to Welsh Local Government and the communities they serve.
3. The WLGA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the inquiry into participation levels in Sport in Wales. In drafting this response, the WLGA has worked in partnership with The Chief Culture and Leisure Officers in Wales (CLOW).
4. Local Authorities in Wales are committed to the delivery of Sport and Physical activity both for its own sake and for the significant benefits it brings to its citizens through Community cohesion, Health and Wellbeing, Economic development and Education standards. They provide a wide variety of facilities ranging from sports halls, swimming pools, playing fields, athletics tracks etc.
5. There is a close working partnership between the WLGA, local authorities, Welsh Government and Sport Wales on the delivery of the Programme for Government, Creating an Active Wales and the Vision for Sport in Wales. It is clearly recognised by all partners that without close cooperation there would be a significant reduction in opportunities provided and a decrease in participation in Sport and Physical activity. This close working relationship was developed and became more formalised in 2012-2013 through the collaboration work instigated by the Simpson Review.
6. It was agreed by the partners that the use of a Results Based Accountability scorecard and of sharing best practice should form the basis of collaboration in particular between local authorities and Sport Wales.
7. CLOW have with Sport Wales and the WLGA created a national scorecard that ensures the relevant parties are “united behind common outcomes” in particular in terms of the impact on participation levels in sport.

8. Underpinning the national scorecard four regional scorecards are being developed in Wales, the South East, South Central, North, Mid and West. Each local authority has its scorecard that underpins the regional priorities.
9. Sport Wales with the WLGA and CCLOW have developed and are piloting a new way forward for the methodology by which funding will in future be invested in local authorities by Sport Wales which will hold local authorities more accountable for raising standards and participation rates
10. In the present very difficult financial constraints local authorities have been identifying more efficient and effective delivery models for their sport and leisure services. Some e.g. Vale of Glamorgan, Bridgend and Torfaen have outsourced their leisure service to an external contractor, external trust and an internal arms length trust. Neath Port Talbot have operated under an in house arms length trust since 1996. Other local authorities after detailed options appraisals have determined that the continuation of an in-house service is their best way forward whilst other local authorities are at this time going through their detailed options appraisals and will shortly be making their decisions on their preferred delivery mechanism. In all cases the overriding factor in the local authorities decision making has not been solely financial but sustainability, efficiency, effectiveness, continuity, quality, improved facilities, improved opportunities for Sport , and increased public access have been at the forefront of their thinking and decision making.
11. Participation level is measured via local indicators and National surveys, the main ones being :-
  - Welsh Health Survey
  - Active Adults Survey (**Sport Wales**)
  - Active Young People Survey (**Sport Wales**)
  - School Sport Survey (**Sport Wales**)
  - Local Authority Partnership agreement (**Sport Wales**)
  - Wales Data unit

The dilemma with the timing of the inquiry is that the data from these surveys is not available for 2012/13 and will only become available in the autumn.

Indications from local authority data that has still to be finalised is that there has been a general increase in sports participation across Wales.

12. In respect of Sports development data this is fed into the Sport Wales research unit as a part of the Local Authority Partnership agreement. This data covers frequency of participation, analysis by age and gender. This data is being completed for 2012/13 and should be available shortly.
13. Many of the programmes in local authorities to develop sport in Wales are carried out in partnership with Sport Wales or specifically with governing bodies. e.g. Dragon Sport, 5x60, outdoor adventure, Free Swim, Disability Sport Wales, PESS, Local Development plans.
14. There are excellent examples across all Welsh local authorities on how Opportunities for sports participation have been created and barriers removed that exist for different groups of people, including by equality strand and socio economic groups.
15. All local authorities work in partnership with disability sport to create opportunities for sports participation through the insport model. The model encourages both integration of people with disabilities into main stream sport and opportunities for people with a different range of disabilities to come together to compete in teams or as individuals. Swimming is an excellent example where there are clubs for disabled participants which are linked to mainstream swimming clubs where individuals with a disability also participate.
16. Local authorities are very conscious of their need to undertake equality impact assessments as a part of their programming of facilities and opportunities. Some excellent examples of local authorities responding to their responsibility to ensure barriers associated with poverty have and are being removed are linked to sensitively delivered concessionary pricing policies offering significant discounts for family tickets and for those in receipt of benefits, e.g. the Cardiff City Council Max Active card offers a 50% concession on all leisure activities for those on benefits and through targeted marketing participation levels grew by 24% in 2012/13.
17. An excellent example of a clear link between Welsh Government initiatives to increase physical activity that has had a direct benefit to Sport in Wales is the Free Swim Initiative for under 16's. Although initially launched as a free splash the initiative has developed from encouraging increased participation to an element of more structured activity targeting non swimmers often on free school meals whose parents could not afford swimming lessons at their local pool. The children along with those attending

the free splash are linked into the local authority and Welsh swimming governing body, National Swimming plan, and aquatics pathway which is seeing an increase in the number of club swimmers and which should result in more high calibre swimmers in the future. Also the children are provided opportunities to pursue other aquatic activities, e.g. surfing, sailing and sub aqua which they could not have accessed without first having the free splash opportunity, then the structured learning sessions. This particular programme also links strongly with the Key stage 2 curriculum of children swimming 25 metres by 11 years of age. CLOW have made swimming a key outcome target of all children swimming by 11yrs and the recent results of using the Welsh Government funding, targeting resources, sharing best practice has brought about ambitious and significant changes in the target number of children able to swim.

18. The results from the Sport Wales school sports survey will provide valuable information on the upturn in club membership rates and levels of participation as a result of the impact and legacy work of the Olympic and Paralympics Games.

There is clear evidence from local authorities that there has been an impact in particular through Sport Wales Community Chest grant funding for Olympic and Paralympics legacy projects.

*E.g. Pembrokeshire County Council*

- 59 newly trained volunteers
- 8 new junior teams
- 2 new senior teams
- 255 new junior community sport members
- 52 new senior sport community club members
- 23 additional sessions per week

*E.g. Cardiff City Council*

- Olympic Legacy Programme - The Road to Rio
- Cardiff Council launched its Legacy programme in February 2013, which has 3 legacy strands. Each strand is led by the relevant sector partner as identified below:
  1. Sport/Physical Activity - Leisure
  2. Health (includes Diet & Nutrition) - Public Health Wales
  3. Cultural - Arts Development
- Linking the scheme to the Free Swim Initiative for the 16 and under age group during the February Half Term helped to increase participation in FSI Structured activities by 50% compared to 2011/12.

- There has been a 20% increase in club membership in Cardiff's 19 priority sports since 2011-12.
19. The WLGA apologises for the lack of detailed performance in respect of participation in Sport in this report. As explained earlier in the response this is directly associated with the timing of the Inquiry and the main sources of data collection through the Heath survey and Sports Wales. It is anticipated that further local authority detail on participation will be available at the oral stage of the inquiry where the WLGA are pleased to be able to give further evidence.

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**For further information please contact:**

Peter Gomer

[peter.gomer@wlga.gov.uk](mailto:peter.gomer@wlga.gov.uk)

Welsh Local Government Association  
Local Government House  
Drake walk  
Cardiff  
CF10 4LG