

17 May 2014



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Dear Christine

We wanted to write to provide yourself and the rest of the committee an update on developments since you published your report into *Participation levels in sport*. We welcome the report and the opportunity it provides to extend the debate on the role that sport plays in Welsh national life and how we can improve the way in which we work together to deliver a healthier, more active Wales.

### Active Adult Survey 2012

We recently published the results of our 2012 Active Adult Survey, which identified that 262,000 more adults (aged 15+) were taking part in regular sporting activity, meaning three or more instances a week. This means 39% of the population in 2012 were undertaking sport more regularly, compared with 29% in 2008/09. We also identified that across the board participation in sport had increased, including figures for all the main sports, bucking the long term trend that had remained broadly static for around ten years. Volunteering in sport had also doubled from 4.6% in 2008 to 10.4% in 2012. Sports club membership has increased from 16% in 2008/09 from 16% to 27% of population in 2012, but it continues to be male dominated. A full state of the nation paper can be downloaded via:

[www.sportwales.org.uk/activeadults](http://www.sportwales.org.uk/activeadults)

Whilst these are positive figures that demonstrate an upward trend, we are not complacent about the need to continue to invest and develop our offer so that every child, young person and adult can benefit from a lifelong participation in sport.

### Sport Wales Calls4Action programme

Both our School Sports Survey and our Active Adult Survey continued to identify that despite increases across the board, there remains gaps in participation. As we said in our evidence to the committee, we do not believe that the barriers to participation are either inevitable or insurmountable.

In order to tackle this in April we launched the next round of our Calls4Action funding programme, making available £3million of national lottery funding to tackle the participation gap and create a sporting environment where everyone has an equal opportunity to access sport.

We will be looking to invest in projects and organisations that can deliver increased participation from young women, BME communities, those with a disability or children and young people living in poverty. We have deliberately put very few conditions in place in order to not stifle the creativity of organisations and we have been pleased with the overwhelming response from a wide variety of partners, old and new. We have organised a series of road show events as well to enable organisations to discuss ideas. The first stage for applications closes on 20<sup>th</sup> June and we would welcome any support that committee members can provide to encourage organisations to consider applications. More information can be found via this link:

<http://www.sportwales.org.uk/calls4action>

### **Sport Wales Survey Methodology**

We acknowledge the recommendation relating to the way in which we carry out our two large scale surveys. It is part of our standard practice to regularly review both the methodology and content of our surveys to ensure that they adhere to good practice and meet both Sport Wales' and Welsh Government's needs.

As a supplier of Official Statistics we have a duty to comply with the Code of Practice of Official Statistics. This Code includes a duty on us to use "*scientific methods to collect statistics and basing statistical advice on rigorous analysis of the evidence*". If we did not have confidence in the methodology or the results of the Survey we would not publish the data. With all of our published data we provide guidance on how precise the data is. This method of reporting is standard practice across Government. Depending on what the measure is and the level of disaggregation will determine whether the data is robust enough to publish.

For examples some of our key measures from our Active Adults Survey 2012, *hooked on sport* and *sports club membership*, the data is not robust enough (due to small sample sizes) to publish by BME groups. Whereas our long-term measure of participation in sport (any participation in sport in the last 4 weeks) we are able to report by some BME groups. In contrast, all of our key measures are robust when we disaggregate by household income level. The published data tables and associated guidance can be found via: [www.sportwales.org.uk/activeadults](http://www.sportwales.org.uk/activeadults).

In terms of the *School Sport Survey 2013*, and due to the size of the sample, we are able to disaggregate and provide robust data on a range of population groups, including BME.

We have regular bilateral meetings with the Welsh Government's Chief Statistician – where he, and his statistical team, work with us and advise us on our compliance with the Code. When we released the *School Sport Survey 2013*, we received positive feedback from the Chief Statistician on how we delivered the survey.

Whilst we recognised that the non-statutory nature of the School Sport Survey means participation is voluntary, and reliant to a large extent on the goodwill of schools and partners towards the survey, through the production of a series of sampling weights we correct for imperfections in the sample of responses collected that might lead to bias and other departures between the sample and the population. The sampling weights compensate for these imperfections and can be used to produce accurate estimates of population characteristics of interest and their associated sampling errors.

In addition to adjusting for non-response, the distributions of gender, year group and free school meal (FSM) entitlement are also accounted for in the weighting. Weighting data is standard practice in population surveys.

In terms of the Active Adult Survey, our methodology is very robust. We changed the sampling frame in 2008/09, on the advice of Welsh Government statisticians, from a quota sample to a random probability sample. Essentially what this means is that we now use the methodology most government surveys use. This method allows us to measure the accuracy and precision of the data. Again, this is what is expected by government surveys and particularly those with the Official Statistics label. We have also recently been involved in conversations with Welsh Government around how we can bring the surveys we run closer together in order to maximise the questions asked and the sample size.

It is important to note here as well that we stress that our partners, governing bodies included, should not be solely reliant on the data we provide in order to develop their plans. They need to be asking the same questions of their own membership so that they have a picture of who is playing their sport. To this end we funded specific research/data posts in a number of governing bodies to build their capacity to understand their own membership. We have also arranged to meet with the Football Association of Wales to discuss the specific points that they raised in their written and oral evidence.

We feel that the recommendation is already being delivered through the formal processes that we have in place.

### **BME Communities**

We were pleased that our School Sport Survey sample was large and diverse enough for us to be able to provide BME data for the first time. It will come as no surprise that the data revealed that participation in those communities is at a lower level, with Asian / British Asian girls among some of the lowest. Unfortunately due to the smaller sample size, our Active Adult Survey we are only able to provide very limited data on participation by BME. As a result of this and in response to the committee recommendation we have committed to undertake a specific piece of research looking at the barriers to sport participation in BME communities in Wales. This should build on the work that has already been undertaken in Wales and elsewhere, providing us with a picture on what more we as a sector need to be doing to make sport more accessible.

This is further to any investment into specific BME projects through Calls4Action and other Sport Wales funding streams. We continue to work with the BME Sport Network to identify opportunities to work in partnership and invest into suitable projects to drive participation.

We will continue to develop our work in this area through our Equality Action Plan and our Community Sport Strategy.

### **Child Poverty Strategy**

We are in the final year of our first child poverty strategy and we will be producing a report on progress for Welsh Government in due course. We recognised that our first strategy was very much focussed on ensuring that the foundations were in place for the sector to tackle the barriers to participation that children and their families living in poverty face. Whilst we are pleased that our School Sport Survey and Active Adult Survey have both shown an increase in the number of children and young people from these communities participating in sport, we acknowledge the need to close the gap in participation with their peers at a quicker rate. We will identify appropriate outcomes and measures as part of the process of developing our new strategy, ensuring these also link into our overall Community Sport Strategy.

### **Sport and the Welsh Language**

Whilst there was no specific recommendation made on this issue, we recognise that it was an area raised and discussed at the committee. The Active Adults Survey identified that 46% of those aged 15 and over who speak Welsh are *hooked on sport* compared with 37% who don't speak Welsh. They are also more likely to be a member of a sports club. Whilst these are promising statistics as part of our on-going work, we will be undertaking further analysis in this area to better understand the interrelationships between sport and Welsh language.

However we and the sport sector recognise that there is more we can do. We recently held a joint seminar with the Welsh Language Commissioner for national governing bodies of sport looking at examples of good practice in sport and to promote the use of Welsh within sport settings. We are looking at taking this work forward in partnership with the Commissioner's Office and our partners, with a view to developing some outcomes as part of the process of renewing our Welsh Language Scheme following the introduction of the Standards.

We are continuing our discussions with colleagues in health and education and welcome the recent commitment by the Welsh Government to providing £1.78million towards their Physical Literacy Programme for Schools, which we will work with them to deliver. We are making positive progress in our discussions with health organisations, including Public Health Wales, and hope to be able to present a number of developments in the coming months.

We agree with the committee that whilst progress is generally positive we would want to see a step change in pace. We strongly believe that the foundations for increasing participation in sport in Wales are strong, but to go to the next level we need to generate buy in from across the public sector to delivering a set of shared outcomes. This is the goal that we are working towards to ensure every child, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to benefit from a lifelong involvement in sport.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Powell  
Chief Executive