



Inquiry into physical activity of children and young people

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

National Assembly for Wales

Abstract:

The Welsh Netball Association (WNA) is an organisation that governs and administers Netball on a National basis. Key areas of accountability are: *

- Control and regulate the environment
- Administer the practice and participation of Netball
- Develop the sport
- Influence both members and organisations of which it is a member
- Prepare and implement a vision and strategic plan for its sport and determine how it will be implemented nationally, regionally and locally
- Promote Netball
- Manage the rules and regulations, including anti-doping, child protection and equality
- Implement a governance framework
- Administer officials; establish and maintain links with Sport Wales, UK/ international governing bodies
- Encourage and grow participation
- Develop coaches, athletes, officials and participants
- Organise and host domestic and International competition

*Not exhaustive

Sarah Jones, CEO Welsh Netball, on behalf of the Association

Introduction

Welsh Netball has a vision that is simply to 'Grow the Game and Inspire Success'. With a current total membership of 8,900* The U18 age group represents 5,671 of the total membership, which is a 32% increase on the 2015/16 season. Netball in Wales is growing rapidly and is a (if not the) key female participation sport in the Country.

The NGB itself has undergone significant structural, strategic and personnel changes in the last 2 years. These positive changes have brought about stability and subsequently ambition to provide more, and higher quality opportunity for the women and girls of Wales who currently play the sport. This in turn will enable greater outreach to those that currently aren't part of the Netball community. Physically active children and young people are key to ensuring a generational shift in attitudes towards health and wellbeing. Netball is a strong vehicle to help with increasing physical activity levels, particularly for women and girls, and delivering long term health benefits for the nation.

The 2 case studies below are examples of the positive affects Netball can have on health and wellbeing, in particular for young women (1 minute 30 seconds each)

- <http://www.welshnetball.com/happy-mothers-day-from-top-tots/>
- <http://www.welshnetball.com/netball-changes-lives-the-misfits/>

*data via internal membership system August 1st 2017

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation.

1. What do we know about physical activity levels in children in Wales? How robust is the data on this issue?

- a. School Sport Survey data has improved since 2013. Sport Wales' 'School Sport Survey' looks at levels of sport and physical activity among school children. The last data in 2015 showed good gains in physical activity. The survey provides valuable insight, of existing participation and latent demand; via significant data across Local Authority, Regions and Nationally. School Sport Survey data is however fairly subjective as it is self-reported by children from ages 7 upwards. Data is as reliable as the collection mechanisms put in place.
- b. Secondary School physical activity levels are measured through the 'Welsh Health Behaviour in School Aged Children Survey' The results from this survey highlight that physical activity levels in children are below the 60 mins of activity daily as recommended by the Chief Medical Officer. We also know that 1 in 5 young people are overweight or obese. Insight from all surveys relating to physical activity, health etc, should be shared collaboratively, cross sectors. Consistency of objectives across all bodies

in the chain is critical so that ‘interventions’ can be put in place successfully; and also so that it minimises conflicting demands within the sport sector.

- c. As an organisation, we have insight into ‘pieces’ of information around physical activity levels of children. These will contribute towards the body of evidence collated when developing strategy and delivery plans as an organisation.

2. Differences in gender-based attitudes towards, and opportunities for, participation in physical activity in Wales

- a. We know that girls are less active than boys, with 52% of boys and 44% of girls taking part in sport three times or more a week
- b. Confidence issues are often cited as reasons for lack of girls engaging in sport and physical activity, these can be overcome with the right resourcing, planning and collaboration. E.g. greater engagement and partnership working with schools. We would welcome more opportunities to engage more proactively with schools to tackle this at an early age.
- c. Netball as a sport is almost entirely geared towards opportunities for female participants. Boys can participate within primary school settings, although (organised) competition at this level heavily promotes female participation by limiting the number of boys on court at any one time. The vast majority of community netball provision engages female participants.

3. The extent to which Welsh Government policies are aimed at whole populations and/or particular groups, and what impact that approach has on addressing health inequalities

- a. Clarity is required on the remit of sport to help deliver the wider physical activity agenda. It must be recognised that approaches to reduce inactivity differ from increasing participation among those who are already active. Sport cannot be accountable for the entire physical activity agenda. Honest, cross organisational collaboration is required at strategic levels, if we are to really make systemic change in alignment with the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

4. Barriers to increasing the levels of physical activity among children in Wales, and examples of good practice in achieving increases in physical activity, and in engagement with hard to reach groups, within Wales, the UK and internationally

- a. Facilities. This is a MAJOR barrier to increasing levels of physical activity among children (and adults) Netball provision has suffered significantly over the recent years, with depleting Local Authority leisure facility stocks. The sport needs facilities that are fit for purpose to function, (minimum 2 courts) without these facilities the participation of this sport for children in Wales is under significant threat. This threat is 3-fold:
 - i. The future of the sport and its growth and the lack of places to play (significant growth happening) Demand far out ways the facilities infrastructure
 - ii. Existing provision is being cut as clubs and leagues have less available facility space as buildings are closed and replacements can't be found. Demand now is higher than the facilities stock, meaning the sport is struggling to maintain existing offers.
 - iii. Increase in 'other sports' competing for facility space and time. (outdoor sports coming indoor due to 'green fee' increases) Increase pressure on scheduling and women's sport loses out

There are very real examples* where lack of fit for purpose facilities cause significant issues for children and young people participating in netball, at the current time. *These are a small number of examples the issues are far wider reaching

- i. Bridgend Leisure Centre was refurbished but reduced to one court completely obliterated Netball participation in the region
 - ii. Llanelli Leisure Centre is due to close - we have over 50 teams (minimum of 350 women and girls) competing. If that becomes a 1 court facility we are facing future losses in children's (and adults) participation
 - iii. Increasing cost of facility hire generally is a real barrier. (South East area league estimates a c.£60,000 facilities spend each year)
 - iv. Lack of adequate facilities and netball courts is unmanageable now, let alone as we look to grow and engage with more women and girls.
- b. Schools facilities - whilst there exists a commitment to open school facilities to the community, Actual reality shows that there remains a lack of appetite to do so. Again, Welsh Netball is keen to work with education to look at solutions and would welcome any opportunities to engage further.
- c. Funding - one-year funding cycles makes long term strategic planning for accurate intervention very difficult. In addition, Sport Wales' funding criteria means that we are not able to deliver sport within the curriculum, or help to train teachers to do so themselves. There are so many exciting and creative ideas for Netball to engage with schools and really make a

positive impact to children's physical activity, but we just can't achieve that under the current funding channels. This is a missed opportunity to ensure that all children consistently receive high quality physical education which has impact on sustained participation in physical activity, health and wellbeing. The reduction in investment and restricted funding streams inevitably means that delivery at community level will be impacted negatively.

5. Physical activity guidelines and how we benchmark physical fitness in children

- a. As we understand it, there are no obligations for schools to undertake formal assessments of PE. Fitness and competency should be recorded, and dedicated curriculum time should be given to physical activity.
- b. For the first time in 2017 the Chief Medical Officer's guidelines on physical activity were included within our funding offer letters from Sport Wales. There was no consultation/communication given to NGBs regarding these measures. This means there is no agreed measurement framework to demonstrate delivery. Resourcing needs to be considered in order for these to be addressed appropriately.

6. Measurement, evaluation and effectiveness of the Welsh Government's programmes and schemes aimed at promoting physical activity of children

- a. Develop stronger links with academia so that we can better align valuable research.
- b. There is a lack of shared outcomes within the sport sector. Roles & responsibilities of various Sport Wales investment partners is ambiguous.
- c. Better evaluation and sharing of experiences/good practice amongst partners is required
- d. Wider public education needed around benefits of exercise and a healthy lifestyle.

7. Value for money of Welsh Government spending to promote exercise in children

This crosses over with question 6.

- a. Measurement of the value of sport on health and wellbeing is relatively easy through numbers, however to evidence impact on children and young people's social cohesion, confidence, journeys etc, is more challenging; but will evidence value for money. E.g. the personal value

and impact of joining a team, feeling of purpose, fitness, health, friends (please refer to the case studies of netball on page 2)

- b. Value for money and measurement are inextricably linked. As an NGB we provide invaluable services which are vital to the delivery of community sport to children and young people. However these services are being squeezed more and more with diminishing reach with the reductions in funding that will ultimately mean less physical activity opportunities in our communities.

8. The role of schools, parents and peers in encouraging physical activity, and the role of Sport Wales, NHS Wales and Public Health Wales in improving levels of physical activity

- a. A distinction between Sport Wales and National Governing Bodies is required and the voice of NGBs is needed as well as that of Sport Wales. Particularly the voice of women's sport and its influence to make positive change to young girls.
- b. Sport Wales, NHS and PHW are all tasked to improve physical activity levels, however generally collaboration between the organisations is poor. Understanding of each other roles & responsibilities means that work goes on in silos.
- c. Sport sits with in the Health ministerial portfolio, and possibly there is a lack of understanding of the sports sectors contribution to the health and wellbeing of Wales' children(psychological and physiological) from the key health decision makers. This is where sport as a whole needs to evidence the social return on investment more effectively.
- d. The role of all the above is critical to improving levels of physical activity. Parental influence is vital, and parents need to be educated on the benefits of physical activity for the health of their children. The messaging needs to be consistent from all of the leading bodies, so that the education is systemic and sustainable, therefore allowing a generational shift in attitudes to physical activity.

Thank you for taking the time to read the thoughts from the Welsh Netball Association and we look forward to engaging with you further as and when appropriate. We are keen to support positive change and are aware that we are a piece of a larger puzzle, but that we are an important piece. The health of our nation has to be a priority and we are keen to help support and shape Government direction in this area.

Should you require anything further please contact:

