

## **Health, Social Care and Sport Committee**

### **Inquiry into the Physical Activity of Children and Young People**

#### **1. Introduction**

Substantially increasing levels of physical activity across Wales is a key commitment of our national strategy *Prosperity for All*. This reflects the importance which physical activity plays in supporting a healthy and active nation and is an integral part of preventative health across a range of cross-government portfolio areas.

The importance of physical activity for children and young people is clear. It has multiple benefits for children's physical, mental and social needs and aids strong growth, co-ordination and helps to reduce the risk of children becoming overweight or obese. The risks of being sedentary are well evidenced and unhealthy behaviours at an early stage are often taken with us into later life.

There is a significant amount of work taking place across Government to promote physical activity. This ranges from the co-ordinated sport and community activities delivered for us by Sport Wales to increasing physical activity within daily routines, delivered by a range of government departments. Actions taken by government have helped to:

- Set an enabling legislative framework;
- Invest in infrastructure and programmes;
- Set policies to promote healthy settings;
- Promote leadership and collaboration; and
- Measure and monitor change.

Many challenges remain. Although there is an upward trend in sport participation, levels of physical activity in children and young people have remained stubbornly low. There are also inequalities such as a significant difference in physical activity levels between boys and girls. A notable trend is for young people of both sexes between the ages of 14-21 to drop out of sport.

Prosperity for All sets out a clear high level commitment across Welsh Government to increasing levels of physical activity. This document presents examples of

initiatives currently under way and opportunities for collaborative working to deliver this commitment.

## **2. Current Position**

An oral statement on the Independent Review of Sport Wales on 3 October 2017, was made by the previous Minister for Social Services and Public Health, which made reference to collaboration between Sport Wales and Public Health Wales to increase peoples' physical activity levels. This will result in the development of collaborative joint actions to bring together opportunities to utilise resources and capacity across organisations.

Following the Independent Review, Sport Wales will produce a vision document, following extensive consultation across Wales with a wide range of partners and stakeholders. Key areas identified for Sport Wales to focus upon which are contained in their remit letter for this year include getting more people active at every stage of their lives, providing children with the best start in life and to encourage them to be active, investing resources where they are needed most especially in socially disadvantaged areas so people have opportunities to take part in sport and physical activity and helping sport to continue to develop by nurturing talent. A new Sport Wales strategy will be published in the Autumn 2018.

Keeping active can help people stay at a healthy weight or lose weight. Through the Public Health Wales Act 2017 there is a commitment to focus on the reduction and prevention of obesity. A consultation will be launched in the Autumn 2018, which will focus on a number of areas for action across diet, nutrition and physical activity.

The Welsh Government is also working collaboratively with Local Health Boards to support a focus on physical activity. Public Health Wales produced briefing papers for health boards and partners in 2017, which shows that there is a cost benefit, where the NHS in Wales spent £35 million in 2015 treating preventable diseases caused by physical inactivity.

## **3. Settings-based Approaches**

The Welsh Government supports a number of programmes or initiatives in Wales which aim to get more children and young people more active. This includes scaled

population approaches, where measurement, evaluation and effectiveness are built into individual programmes at inception.

Welsh Government has asked Sport Wales, Public Health Wales and Natural Resources Wales to work together to develop a collaborative action plan on physical activity across all ages. This work is underway.

### Early Years

Physical skills, body awareness and spatial awareness contribute to a child's personal and social development by enhancing confidence and self-esteem. During play children engage in learning experiences that require them to use a range of physical skills whether playing indoors or outdoors. The Foundation Phase recognises physical development as a core area of learning to support children to understand how their bodies move and develop an understanding about the positive role which exercise plays.

The Healthy Pre-school settings programme supports the development of a whole setting approach to a range of health topics, including physical activity/active play. Over 650 pre-school settings are currently being supported to develop this work which reflects the importance of the promotion of a wide range of accessible physical activities and active play for children and staff, including access to play environments and experiences that meet the developmental needs of children.

### Physical Activity in Schools

Physical Activity forms part of the statutory curriculum for all pupils up to the age of 16 playing a key role in building and maintaining their health, fitness and wellbeing. The programme of study for Physical Education (PE) requires schools to give learner opportunities to participate in the four specified areas of learning which cover Health, Fitness and Wellbeing, Creative Adventurous and Competitive activities. Delivery of the curriculum is delegated to schools and decisions on the precise content of a school's programme and the choice of activities and resources used is a matter for local discretion to ensure that the needs of the children and local community are met.

Between 2001 and 2014, the Welsh Government provided £26m funding to Sport Wales to deliver the PE and School Sports Initiative (PESS). PESS supported

improved standards of teaching and learning in curriculum PE. During the time, Key Stage 3 PE attainment levels increased from 61% in 2001 to 91% in 2015.

In September 2014 the Physical Literacy Programme for Schools (PLPS) commenced, working in school in the most deprived areas in Wales. Between 2014 and 2016, £3.7m has been provided to Sport Wales to manage the programme, which aimed to implement the recommendations from the Physical Activity Task and Finish Group Chaired by Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson. An evaluation of PLPS by SPEAR, Canterbury Christ Church University shows that , the PLPS has engaged almost 16,500 young people from primary and secondary schools, of which almost 6,000 were involved in Young Ambassador-led opportunities, and over 10,500 involved in engaging opportunities. The number of young people participating in physical activity every day by week 12 has increased by 204%, resulting in over 5,000 additional young people engaging in physical activity every day.

Following consideration of the Successful Futures report by Professor Donaldson we are developing a new curriculum. Six new Areas of Learning Experiences (AoLEs) will be central to the new curriculum one of which will be Health and Wellbeing.

The key legacy from The PLPS programme was the interactive Physical Literacy Journey (PLJ) (formerly known as the Physical Literacy Framework) which has been published on Sport Wales website. The PLJ has been developed as a tool to help stakeholders determine and support progress of children and young people. The PLJ has been considered by the Health and Wellbeing AoLE pioneer schools as part of the new Curriculum developments.

Dragon Sport encourages children aged 7 to 11 to participate in eight extra-curricular sports and includes the training of volunteers to deliver sporting opportunities with 96% of primary schools delivering Dragon Sport across Wales. £1.02m was invested in 2017-2018. 5x60 is an extra curricular programme for 11-16 year olds; where fully trained officers are located in participating secondary schools and activities range from mountain biking, hill walking, surfing, football, cricket, netball, dance, aerobics and table tennis. This programme is being rolled out across 99% of secondary schools in Wales with £4.2m invested in 2017-2018. Welsh Government support is offered to local authorities to provide Free Swimming to children 16 and under and

adults 60 and over. A budget of £3m was made available in 2017-18. The Active Young People programmes and the Free Swimming schemes are currently being reviewed and the outcomes are expected to be reported shortly.

The Welsh Government has worked collaboratively with Public Health Wales to launch the Daily Mile an initiative which gets school pupils completing together a mile every school day. Since the launch in 2017 we have seen a steady rise schools signing up to the initiative. Around 200 schools in Wales now take part. A recent long-term study on the impacts of the Daily Mile has been published by the Universities of Stirling and Edinburgh. It found that the Daily Mile increases levels of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity, improves body composition, fitness levels and reduces average daily sedentary behaviour.

### Whole School Approaches

The Welsh Network for Healthy Schools was established to support a whole school approach and ethos towards health and well being including physical activity. The Welsh Government provided funding for local schemes, £2.3m per annum through Public Health Wales' core budget. Dedicated healthy school practitioners work directly with schools to help them implement improvements to school practice in order to comply with the national framework. Over 99% of all schools in Wales are now involved in the programme. To date 163 have achieved the National Quality Award. A Cochrane review, undertaken by researchers including those at DECIPHer, Cardiff University, looked at the best evidence available worldwide to determine the effectiveness of the 'Health Promoting Schools' (HPS) approach. The research found that interventions using the HPS approach were able to reduce students' body mass index (BMI), increase physical activity and fitness levels and improve fruit and vegetable consumption.

In line with the Network of Health Schools ethos we are focussed on the role of schools as healthy settings. The Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Wales) Regulations 2013 sets out the types of food and drink that should be provided during the school day. This includes not allowing schools to serve confectionery, increasing the availability of fruit and vegetables served by

schools, limiting foods cooked in fats and oils and schools only providing healthy drinks, such as water and milk.

### Further Education

Sport Wales provide project funding for Further Education (FE) colleges which is managed by ColegauCymru. The project's original aims are increasing participation, tackling inequality and developing volunteering. Tackling inactivity has become a focus for the project and in the first four years of the partnership over 5,000 non-sporty students have tried a new activity, hopefully leading to a healthier lifestyle. This equates to over 11% of the FE population in Wales. Sport Wales have funded an independent review of the FE project which will be used as the basis for development of a new strategy for FE sport and wellbeing in Wales from 2018/19 onwards.

## **4. Active Environments**

Physical activity is not just about children and young people participating in organised sport and activities. Building increasing walking or cycling within daily routines can support positive lifestyles and ingrain healthy habits for life. The Welsh Government will continue to invest in our infrastructure to develop inclusive environments which encourages increased levels of physical activity. The Active Travel Act is a critical enabler. The total available funding for local active travel schemes is nearly £82m over the next three years and additionally, we expect to spend £9.5m on Active Travel as part of our own major highway projects over the same timescale. We will continue to work with local authorities and partners through the development of Network Route maps.

We recognise that achieving a shift in travel behaviour on a large scale is crucial to the long term success of the Act. We also recognise that this will be hugely challenging and require a concerted effort by all partners. The most recent high level data on levels of active travel from the new National Survey for 2016-17 indicates decreases in walking and cycling among adults and a more worrying decline in walking to school, where children actively travelling to primary school fell from 50% in 2013-14 to 44% in 2016-17.

## Active Journeys

Increasing levels of walking and cycling to schools is a high priority, as behaviours formed in childhood can have a lasting impact on later life. Across Government we have a range of programmes which encourage active travel in a school setting. This includes, the Active Journeys programme, which delivers a package of interventions in schools across Wales in order to support schools in changing travel to school behaviour and enabling active travel within schools. Over 280 schools have benefitted from the programme, receiving direct support from Sustrans Cymru school officers. Its interim annual report suggests that for those schools participating we have seen an increase of 6.5 percentage points in active travel journeys to school after one year and 9.6 percentage points after two years.

## Play

The Welsh Government places great value on play and its importance in the lives of our children. We believe that children have a fundamental right to be able to play, and that play is central to their enjoyment of life. It contributes to their and their families' well-being, health and future life chances. We also believe that play is essential for the growth in children's cognitive, physical, social and emotional development.

The Play Sufficiency duty, part of the Welsh Government's anti-poverty agenda and Our 'Wales – a Play Friendly Country' statutory guidance fully recognises that whilst play is important in its own right, it is also an important component in achieving other agendas relating to children's well-being and development. The Welsh Government recognises the importance of play in children's lives, particularly outdoor play in green spaces, which contributes to children's health, development and appreciation of the environment. We have demonstrated our commitment by the allocation of just under £5 million since 2013 to support local authorities to meet their Play Sufficiency duty. We also recently announced the allocation of a further £1.7 million for local authorities to support delivery.

## **5. Targeted Approaches to increase physical activity levels**

Whilst we know that whole population approaches will be successful in achieving population health outcomes, we also know that certain programmes and practitioners play an important role to tackle health inequalities with particular groups in the population. There are also specific barriers which prohibit increasing physical activity levels amongst certain groups and Protected Characteristics.

### Community Based Approaches

The Welsh Government Primary Care Plan aims to develop a more “social” model of health, which promotes physical, mental and social well-being, rather than just the absence of ill health and draws in all relevant organisations, services and people to ensure the root causes of poor health are addressed. Social prescribing offers the opportunity for a more co-productive model of well-being where patients, including families and children can become involved in decisions about their own health and more proactive in looking after themselves. This includes signposting to local services around lifestyle choices and to increase activity. We also know there are established links between good mental health, wellbeing and physical activity. The Welsh Government have committed to delivering a social prescribing pilot for mental health services and two small-scale pilots are being funded through the ‘Innovate to Save’ fund.

A Wellbeing Bond has been launched which will aim to develop innovative, community approaches to improving mental and physical health and to reduce sedentary lifestyles. This includes aligning funding through a commitment to deliver a challenge fund for sport as part of Prosperity for All. This will be utilised to focus upon local priorities to provide a healthy and active fund and the first pilot of funding intends to focus £1m investment into increasing levels of physical activity across Wales. This will potentially include developed projects which will focus upon children and young people.

The success of grassroots approaches such as Parkrun have been successful at a local level and we will continue to invest in grass roots sport.

Since 2004 Sport Wales has collated data through its Active Adult Survey (now incorporated in the National Survey for Wales 2016/17) and the Schools Sport

Survey. This information allows them to review both reasons for not participating (or not participating more) in sport and physical activity as well as the kinds of activities that respondents say they would like to do more. This information will continue to be used to help inform sport-related action plans.

We know for some that a lack of access to community sport facilities can be a significant barrier for engagement and participation in physical activity. Following the decision by Cabinet in July 2016 not to bid for 2026 Commonwealth Games, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure (now Transport) announced a review of sports facilities in Wales. This work will run until the end of the summer 2018. The aim of this work is to consider how to increase the spread of world class sports venues across the country that would also benefit the local community (as well as elite and performance athletes).

### Poverty

Children from poorer circumstances can experience increased exposure to risk factors including poorer diets and lower physical activity levels. The School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) is a multi-agency programme which seeks to enhance the summer holiday experience for children from the most deprived communities providing them with healthy food, getting them outside, active and having fun. In 2017 SHEP was delivered in 38 schools across 12 local authorities in Wales to approximately 1500 children. Following a positive evaluation the Welsh Government has agreed to fund the WLGA with £500,000 of additional funding for 2018/19 and 2019/20. This coming summer it is expected the programme will be delivered in 60 schools across 16 local authorities reaching around 3200 children.

Sport Wales and the Welsh Government are continuing to invest in StreetGames Wales which works with disadvantaged communities engaging young people in 'doorstep' sports activities to help reduce inequalities and tackle poverty through sport.

### Pregnancy, Families and Parenting

Chief Medical Officer recommendations released in 2017 suggests that pregnant women should carry out around 150 minutes of 'moderate intensity' activity every week. This aims to reduce issues such as obesity, diabetes and other health

concerns during pregnancy. Information and guidelines were developed for health board and partners.

Practitioners play a vital role to support physical activity. The Healthy Child Wales Programme (HCWP) sets out what planned contacts children and their families can expect from their health boards; from maternity service handover to the first years of schooling (0-7 years). These universal contacts cover three areas of intervention; screening, immunisation and monitoring and supporting child development. The programme includes a consistent range of evidence based preventative and early intervention measures, and advice and guidance to support parenting and healthy lifestyle choices.

Flying Start provides opportunities for interventions with families and children to promote healthy lifestyles within the most disadvantaged communities in Wales. The Flying Start health programme sets down an enhanced universal programme of interventions which should be delivered to all Flying Start families. A family receiving Flying Start health services can expect as many as 7 additional 'contacts' from their health visitor. The promotion of key public health messages and of healthy lifestyles is a key part of the additional Flying Start health support offered by health visitors and the wider workforce.

### Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Public Health Wales has undertaken a study into ACEs and published a series of four reports on its findings. A report into links with mental health found that regular participation in sport during childhood was associated with lower levels of mental illness. While much attention has been paid to the cardiovascular and weight reduction potential of participating in sport, its impact of friendship opportunities, benefits to mental health, access to role models and the other aspects of resilience needs to be factored into its benefits and further understood.

We have a range of current programmes which support those who have experienced, are experiencing, or are in danger of experiencing ACEs. These include the Flying Start, Families First and Children First programmes, all of which work with children and their families to identify risks and needs and offer appropriate and timely interventions to address them.

## Girls and Young Women

There is a significant difference in physical activity levels between boys and girls with 20.1% of boys and 10.7% of girls participating to the recommended amount.

A barrier to participation may be the “type” of sport boys and girls are allowed to participate in, typically football and rugby for boys, netball and hockey for girls. 82% of girls perceive there to be at least one barrier to taking part in PE at school compared to 58% of boys. Research by Women is Sport (2012) has found that boys receive encouragement from friends to be sporty whereas girls do not, that women make up only 7% sport media coverage in the UK and that 1 in 3 14-16 year old girls are unhappy with their body image, feeling more self conscious than boys.

Sport Wales continue to work to close the sport and physical activity participation gaps between males and females and to focus on providing good quality sporting opportunities for girls and young women to take part in sport. Through their “Calls for Action” programme, over £1.5 million has been invested in a number of projects that aim to increase regular sporting participation amongst young women and girls. The ‘Us Girls’ movement set up by StreetGames Wales and funded by Sport Wales continues to increase participation in sport by young women from deprived areas across Wales. “Us Girls” won the Sporting Experience of the Year at the Wales Sport Wales Awards 2017.

During August 2017, Sport Wales launched “Our Squad”, a campaign aimed at inspiring, empowering and encouraging more women and girls in Wales to get active and give sport a go; signposting new participants to the opportunities that are available in Wales. In terms of specific sports, girls’ football has grown significantly with the number of registered players increasing by 32% in the last year and the number of girls playing rugby in one of the 95 schools and colleges that are involved in the Welsh Rugby Union’s School-Club Hub Programme has gone from less than 200 to almost 10,000 in the last three years. Wales Golf has also just appointed a new Women and Girls' Golf officer.

## Increasing participation in Black Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities

Limited research has looked into BME children and physical activity participation, The School Sport Survey showed 52% of Black British or mixed race children were

hooked on sport, compared to 36% of Asian and other ethnic groups participated regularly.

To ensure there is equality of opportunity for people to take part in sport within our communities Sport Wales have a BME Sport project in place. This group is making good progress with over 150 new volunteers and over 1900 males and 1300 females have engaged. Sport Wales has invested a further £92k for a 9-month period of 1<sup>st</sup> until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

### Disabilities

Disability Sport Wales (DSW) aim to promote and develop opportunities for disabled people to participate in sport and physical activity. Their vision is to transform lives through the power of sport so every person has the right to a full and lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity. DSW have in the region of 23,000 club members and provide over 1 million sport participation opportunities each year providing a range of activities and actively promote a “ I can do approach”.

The Health Disability Sport Partnership is a joint project between Betsi Cadwalder University Health Board and Disability Sport Wales (DSW). The partnership has built a strong and sustainable relationship and pathway between Health and disability (or inclusive) sport, supporting disabled people to improve their physical and mental health and well being through physical activity.

## **6. Leadership, Collaboration and Monitoring**

There is continuing practice developing across Wales which is helping to shape local delivery. This is being underpinned by the five ways of working through the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 and through Wellbeing Plans which will help to respond to local need. We are aware of emergent practice such as Newport Live, Getting North Wales Moving and Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board’s Physical Activity Strategy. These approaches have been developed through increased partnerships and greater local accountability.

We also know that peer support is vital to drive behaviour change. Sport Wales is continuing to invest in the Young Ambassador Programme which is a highly successful programme for students in schools, colleges and universities, providing

opportunities to develop essential employability skills and experiences that create or fuel their aspirations and ambitions for the future. It aims to empower and inspire young people to become leaders through sport to help encourage others to become hooked on sport and physical activity. With over 2,800 participants, Young Ambassadors are a vital part of the sporting workforce in Wales and volunteer numerous hours in schools and communities.

We are continuing to draw upon a range of data sources to evaluate the impact of approaches. This includes:

#### Chief Medical Officer Physical Activity Guidelines

The Chief Medical Officer guidelines state that children and young people should engage in moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity for at least 60 minutes every day. Overall, 51% of children aged 3-17 meet the guidelines, however, only 14-17% of children aged 11-16 partake in the recommended amount of physical activity.

The guidelines are currently under review, being led by Bristol University on behalf of all UK nations to ensure they reflect the most updated evidence.

#### Active Healthy Kids Report Card

The Active Healthy Kids Wales card from 2016 assesses a range of data sources on physical activity to give a picture of the state of the nation, which is able to draw upon international comparators. This rates Wales as D- on levels of physical activity and sedentary behaviour. However, rates national government policies, strategies and investment at B-. A further publication is due in 2018.

#### School Sport Survey and FE Sport & Active Lifestyles Survey

Sport Wales collects data related to sports participation in Wales through the School Sport Survey. In 2015, 116,000 children from 1,000 different schools across Wales took part in the survey. The survey reported that 93% of children in Wales enjoy physical education and 48% of pupils across Years 3 to 11 in Wales take part in organised sporting activity outside of curriculum time on three or more occasions per week. However, boys (52%) were still more likely than girls (44%) to participate regularly in sport and physical activity.

The results of the school sports survey was subsequently published on our My Local School website.

Research into sports participation amongst 14 to 21-year olds indicates that both girls and boys drop out of sport during secondary school. The School Sport Survey and FE Sport & Active Lifestyles Survey will take place again this year and the results will be available in autumn 2018.