

The Welsh Government's response to the recommendations in the Senedd's Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee report.

“Levelling the playing field: A report on participation in sport and physical activity in disadvantaged areas”.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the Welsh Government introduce a new national approach for participation in sport and physical activity in disadvantaged areas. This approach should bring together existing work and good practice that is already taking place as well as introduce new ideas to contribute to this approach. This should include measurable targets, set against a defined time period of five years, to ensure that there is equity in access to participating in sport and physical activity.

Response: Reject

Sport Wales helped the sector produce a national vision and developed its own strategy for sport in Wales in line with that vision that is supported by other public bodies, such as Public Health Wales and Natural Resources Wales. This vision is for an active nation where everyone can have a lifelong enjoyment of sport. This was developed following extensive consultation led by Sport Wales following the independent review of Sport Wales commissioned by the Welsh Government in 2017. A key strand in Sport Wales's existing work has a priority focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion with performance measured against key indicators. Whilst a new wholesale approach is not required, we will continue to review existing approaches to ensure we maximise participation in sport and physical activity in disadvantaged areas.

We are hosting a Sport Summit in December, led jointly by the Welsh Government and Sport Wales, bringing together the whole sector with a key part of the Summit focussing on enhancing participation in sport and physical activity in disadvantaged areas. This Summit will aim to further capture best practice and explore additional opportunities for expanding our work in this area.

Financial implications: None

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the Welsh Government urgently provide additional project funding to Sport Wales to enable it to undertake work to identify and deliver opportunities that enable those from disadvantaged groups to benefit from sport and physical activity.

Response: Reject

The Welsh Government provides an annual budget to Sport Wales - £21.6m revenue and £8m capital in 2022-23 – to deliver on the priorities set out in the Welsh

Government's term of government remit letter. Providing equal access to sporting opportunities is a key commitment in our Programme for Government and improving access and participation and addressing inequality in all its forms are priorities in the remit letter. All of Sport Wales's core programmes are focussed on enhancing equality, diversity and inclusion supported by performance measures.

Alongside the core funding, we also make additional project funding available to support wider Programme for Government commitments around improving access and inclusion. One example is the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan grant scheme which seeks to improve participation and inclusion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.

Financial implications: None.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the Welsh Government fund the opening up of school facilities in disadvantaged areas to increase opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity in those areas. This should be done as follows:

- i. The Welsh Government should review the findings of the different pilots that are taking place with regards to opening schools for wider community use and report and publish a response to this work by no later than July 2023.**
- ii. Work with local authorities to undertake a Wales-wide audit of school sport, leisure and physical activity facilities to identify what exists what is the state of these facilities. This should include considering how accessible these facilities are in terms of travel method, including pay special attention to the location of Welsh-medium schools in relation to the community they serve.**
- iii. Following completion of this audit, the Welsh Government should identify the areas that require the most urgent support to ensure equity of access to sport and physical activity opportunities and provide the appropriate funding levels to make it happen.**

Response: Accept in principle.

Making effective use of educational facilities for our children and the local community has always been a key aim underpinning education investment through the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme.

We are already providing funding to support schools to operate and develop as Community Focused Schools, reaching out to engage with families and work with the wider community to support all pupils, particularly those disadvantaged by poverty.

The Minister for Education and Welsh Language has announced £24.5m in 2022-23 to support this work, which includes £20m of capital investment to allow schools to develop further as community assets. We are also developing a suite of guidance to support schools, local authorities and key stakeholders with the implementation of a

community focused schools approach. This will be informed by the findings of the review into the pilot schemes to increase community use of schools, once they are available.

Sport Wales has carried out a policy review into best practice for opening school facilities for physical activity, nationally and internationally. This will be available shortly. Sport Wales has also carried out a facility snapshot survey across different local authorities, broadly outlining the provision of facilities in the area attached to schools. The Welsh Government has also commissioned a baseline survey of schools, which included questions about use of facilities and will be available shortly.

Financial implications: None.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the Welsh Government fund the opening up of community facilities in disadvantaged areas to increase opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity in those areas. This should be done as follows:

- i. Work with local authorities, schools, leisure facility providers and sports clubs to undertake a Wales-wide audit of these facilities to identify what exists, and what is the state of these facilities. This should include considering how accessible these facilities are in terms of safety of access routes, and travel method.**
- ii. Following completion of this audit, the Welsh Government should identify the areas that require the most urgent support to ensure equity of access to sport and physical activity opportunities and provide the appropriate funding levels to make it happen.**

Response: Accept in principle.

Whilst a complex and evolving issue, we will further consider the need and practicalities of auditing all community sports facilities in discussion with partners and stakeholders.

Through Sport Wales there are several grant streams available for community clubs to access funding for new facilities and improving existing facilities. There is also capital support available through the Community Facilities Programme; though this is not specifically aimed at sports facilities, grassroots clubs can apply where there is wider community use as part of the bid.

Financial implications: To be determined.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the Welsh Government ensure that programmes for funding sport and physical activity in disadvantaged areas are placed on longer-term funding cycles.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government is unable to provide clarification around budgets beyond the current budget settlement it receives from the UK Government but will always provide long-term clarity when in a position to do so. Sport Wales and other organisations, such as local authorities, have been provided with three-year budgets for the period 2022-23 to 2024-25. This provides greater certainty, helps long-term strategic planning and encourages a greater degree of collaboration between organisations.

Financial implications: None.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that the Welsh Government significantly increase the funding available for addressing participation in sport and physical activity in disadvantaged areas.

Response: Reject

The Welsh Government has provided Sport Wales with a three-year revenue budget allocation to deliver on our collective priorities set in the Welsh Government's term of government remit letter to Sport Wales. We have also allocated capital funding of £24m over three years to invest in sporting facilities, a key Programme for Government commitment. The Welsh Government is continuing to strengthen the links between health and sport, through our Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales strategy with a focus on health inequalities. This includes an investment in a range of programmes through over £13m across the 2022-24 delivery plan. We will continue to consider the impact of these investments as part of our evaluation approach and will review budgets through our in-year and annual budget-setting process to ensure investment levels remain appropriate.

Financial implications: None.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the Welsh Government and Sport Wales commission an independent review of the impact of the new investment approach on participation in disadvantaged areas in three years' time.

Response: Accept.

Sport Wales's new investment approach was initially launched before the Covid-19 pandemic. Transition to full implementation was delayed to protect funding levels over a two-year period to provide the sector with stability through an uncertain Covid period. As the School Sport Survey has been conducted in 2022, this financial year will be the final year where funding is protected and in 2023-24 the final aspect of the investment model, relating to data, will be implemented. Sport Wales will then work with partners to transition to the new investment model, with full implementation expected in 2025-26. It is Sport Wales's intention to review its new investment approach on a regular basis to ensure it is still fit for its purpose particularly against the impact on participation in disadvantaged areas.

Financial implications: None.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that the Welsh Government set up a pilot scheme for a Physical Activity Development Grant, using lessons learnt from the “Active Me – Kia Tū” pilot in New Zealand, in order to improve access for those in disadvantaged areas to access sport and physical activity opportunities.

Response: Accept in principle

The Welsh Government already provides funding for many of the areas supported by the “Active Me – Kia Tū” scheme.

The “Access” strand of the Welsh Government’s Pupil Development Grant is available to families whose children are eligible for free school meals. It helps cover the costs associated with the school day, including school sports kit and equipment. This is available to eligible families for children in all compulsory school years at a rate of £125 (£200 for year 7). An uplift of £100 per eligible pupil has been applied to this grant for the 2022/23 academic year, to help families manage during the cost-of-living crisis.

We are currently rolling out Universal Primary Free School Meals in Wales, starting with the youngest children as they are more likely to be living in relative income poverty. This is a transformational intervention to raise the profile of healthy eating across the whole school, increase the range of food pupils eat, improve social skills and wellbeing at mealtimes, and lead to improvements to behaviour and attainment.

In Wales, all children who go to a primary school which is maintained by a local authority can have a free breakfast at school through the Free Breakfast in Primary Schools scheme. The aim of the scheme is to provide children with a healthy breakfast before the start of the school day. Children who have the opportunity to eat a healthy and nutritious breakfast prior to the start of the school day are healthier and are more likely to achieve their full educational potential.

We have also established a National Physical Activity Group which will consider how we can increase cross-government links and partnerships to enhance delivery and policies which can increase physical activity opportunities. For example, we are continuing to invest in programmes through our Active Travel programme, with over £200m expected to be allocated over this and the following two financial years.

We will engage further with the New Zealand government and Sport New Zealand to understand its approach.

Financial implications: None.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that Sport Wales ensures that future National School Sports Survey data is made available in an open-source format to provide increased insight in order to ensure better equity of access to sport in disadvantaged areas.

Response: Accept.

This is a recommendation for Sport Wales. Sport Wales has already signalled an intention to progress work to host the data in an intuitive, interactive, and open-source format.

Financial implications: None

Recommendation 10

We recommend that the Welsh Government and Sport Wales consider how it can gather qualitative data in order to provide better insight into the issues facing sports participation in disadvantaged areas.

Response: Accept.

Sport Wales will continue to gather its evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, through partnership working to best understand the issues facing sports participation in disadvantaged areas. This evidence will be showcased through its annual reporting, but crucially as part of its strategic role in sharing best practice and instigating collaboration in the system.

Financial implications: None.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that the Welsh Government fund, and Sport Wales then pilot, and roll out a full, regular survey of adult sports participation.

Response: Reject

The Welsh Government and Sport Wales jointly fund the National Survey for Wales. Every year since 2016-17 the National Survey has collected robust, detailed information on sport participation (with the exception of 2020 when it was decided with Sport Wales not to include the regular questions on sport participation given the restrictions in place due to the pandemic). Capturing information via the National Survey means that the sport results can be analysed against a wide variety of other topics covered in the survey, including health topics and material deprivation. Detailed analysis of the results is published regularly by the Welsh Government and by Sport Wales, including of sport participation cross-analysed against material deprivation.

The Welsh Government and Sport Wales are currently designing additional sport and physical activity content for the National Survey over the next few years. New content is likely to cover barriers to participating in sport, volunteering, attitudes to sport and physical activity and views about local sports facilities. The Welsh Government will continue to work closely with Sport Wales to review the current questions in light of the Committee's findings.

Financial implications: None.

Recommendation 12

We recommend that the Welsh Government consider how it can bring together different sources of data related to sports participation in disadvantaged areas and make it publicly available in one place.

Response: Accept.

The Welsh Government currently collates information around the National Survey for Wales, which has previously collected robust information on barriers to participation, and on levels of participation among disadvantaged groups, and key notional milestone indicators. Sport Wales collates official statistics through the School Sport Survey as well as bespoke project level information and other quantitative tracking surveys, allied with qualitative evidence.

Partnerships, such as those with the Welsh Institute of Physical Activity, Health and Sport, are also used to bring together different sources of data into one reporting approach as part of its work. The work Sport Wales will be doing in terms of its information dashboard development will also help support the sharing of data in one centralised online space.

Financial implications: None.