

Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Participation in Sport in Disadvantaged Areas

Sport Wales Brief ahead of Oral Inquiry

16th March 2022

Sport Wales welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence at the Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, International Relations and Sport Committee's inquiry into sport in disadvantaged areas. We believe that an **intersectional approach – driven by data**, coupled **with multi-sector policy initiatives** will extend the benefits of sport to everyone in Wales. The **Vision** for Sport in Wales is the platform for cross sector engagement in sport and physical activity and seeks to transform Wales into an active nation. **Importantly, The Vision is not just a mission for Sport Wales to work towards.** We would be happy to discuss more about The Vision for Sport in Wales with the Committee.

1. What are the main barriers to participation in sport in disadvantaged areas? How do these intersect with other factors?

Broadly, the main barriers to sport may be structural, institution, personal or social – and in almost all instances, are made up of a combination of these. These barriers impact on people from ethnic minorities, migrants, those with disabilities, elderly people, children, women and girls and people who are gender diverse and often these issues are not isolated but intersectional in their nature. Typically, communities in disadvantaged areas have a higher rate of these inequalities. Structural barriers exist when access is non-existent, limited or when the sporting environment is not suitable, or not able to be adapted to meet the needs of an individual. Institutional barriers mean that opportunities to access sport are hidden, and/or removed from an individual because of poorly designed systems; or systems that have been designed to only suit certain users. Personal and social determinants will mean as individuals begin to navigate the structural and institutional barriers – they will encounter their own unique challenges, based specifically in relation to who they are.

2. How clear a picture do we have of current participation levels in disadvantaged areas? Does the current data enable policy interventions to be effective?

We are an insight led organisation and as such - have a clear picture on the levels of participation, barriers and enablers that constitute participation in sport. Our **School Sport Survey** is the oldest and largest per-capita of its type in the world, and we are extremely proud of this innovative and world leading approach to pupil voice. Similarly, the data we collect via the **National Survey for Wales** is a robust statistical measure of motivation and habits surrounding physical activity in Wales. These are two examples of how insight drives policy intervention we advocate for. Our full written response to this inquiry includes a detailed breakdown of this data. Importantly, we also know that the lived experiences of communities and individuals will vary greatly and acknowledge the importance of bringing together qualitative experiences with statistical data.

3. How should public funding be use to increase participation in disadvantaged areas?

In addressing persistent inequality and barriers to sport participation; we assert that there are three key components to consider: **diversity of investment, diversity of opportunity**, and a **cross sector pledge** to transform Wales into an active nation through visible commitment to the Vision for Sport in Wales.

We are category unapologetic about the way we **invest** in Welsh sport and in recent years we have changed the way in which we do this. Our investment approach now varies based on who and where we are investing but is always consistent of one component - we place addressing inequality at the centre of how we use public funds. You can read about our approach to investment [here](#). **Diversity of opportunity** is a fundamental component to ensuring that people build lifelong habits to be active. This includes supporting opportunities to participate in multisport offers at a young age and, accelerating opportunities whereby sport is delivered in conjunction with another medium – such as the chance to volunteer or utilise the Welsh language. Further, providing opportunities for people to be active, should not just be the sole responsibility of the sport sector. A

cross-sector pledge to consider sport and physical activity in all policies should be a key consideration for policy makers. Our data tell us that single interventions alone, will not make a significant impact to the promotion of sport and physical activity.

4. How effective are current interventions at increasing participation in disadvantaged areas?

At Sport Wales, we are committed to celebrating the learning and successes of our partners and there is some excellent work currently being undertaken with the sport sector. Our full response showcases these via case studies from our partners – such as Street Games and the Urdd. Further, we acknowledge that it may take time to learn of the effectiveness of interventions and assert, our School Sport Survey is vitally important in understanding change over time. It should also be recognised that it is not always possible to compartmentalise the impact of sporting interventions in society with wider issues around health, crime, education, community cohesion and other contributing factors.

5. Has the pandemic caused any persistent changes to participation levels in disadvantaged areas?

At the start of the pandemic, we worked with Savanta ComRes to help initially understand the impact the pandemic has had, or was having, on activity levels. We have since understood that this polling is a useful addition to the population level data we currently collect, and, on our website, you will see that we have broken the data we obtain through this into various demographical characteristics. In 2020—21 we reported that: older adults, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and those with a long-standing condition or illness were persistently more likely to report doing less activity than they were before the pandemic. Our first iteration of this survey for 2022 is currently being analysed at the time of writing this response.

6. How effectively do different sectors (e.g. education and health) collaborate to improve participation in sport in disadvantaged areas?

We recognise that in recent years, there has been an impactful shift in sport and physical activity working collaboratively with other sectors. Our work attached to Healthy Weight; Healthy Wales and with Education colleagues in piloting pupils being active beyond the school day are two examples of this. We do believe however; this could go further. We think creating an opportunity for sport to be considered within other budget areas could be one method of recognising its importance and demonstrating a cross sector approach to this.

7. Are there examples of best practice, both within Wales and internationally, that Wales should learn from to increase participation in sport in disadvantaged areas?

There are four key opportunities whereby we think Wales could be world leading in addressing the complexities within this area. Much of this we are already doing and in part, is based on international best practice. Currently however, much of this is being advocated for, and delivered by sport alone. We think, cross-sector support for these will be transformative.

- Supporting the development of **Sport Partnerships** to transform the way sport is delivered at local community level – *informed by the New Zealand approach.*
- Accelerating **Wales Person Centred Approach** to sport when we talk about Welsh sport on the world stage – *a similar model has been adopted in Norway.*
- A commitment to models which promote being **Active Beyond the School Day** and opening of school facilities after hours for community use – *multiple international models.*
- Support for **Sport in All Policies** with recognition of this in cross sector budgets – *similar to the Health in All Policies commitment (Wales) and Wellbeing Budget Marker (New Zealand).*