

Poverty and children & young people's ability to participate in sport in Wales

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Section 1 Summary

This high level report sets out to explore how poverty impacts children and young people's ability to regularly participate in sport as we move out of the COVID 19 pandemic. We also suggest some ideas on how the consequences of poverty can be minimised, so it has less of an impact on children and young people's participation in sport.

To do this we first look at the impact of poverty on young people in Wales. Much of the narrative in this section will no doubt be familiar to many. We felt it was important, however, to remind readers of the definitions and policy context through which poverty is understood, as well as the scale of poverty in Wales. The picture is bleak - three in ten children in Wales live in poverty, some parents have had to cut back on food and the pandemic has made the situation a lot worse.

We next look at the general issue of sport and young people. What it is, why it is important and how many young people regularly participate. Here there is some good news. More children are participating in sport from groups that have traditionally been marginalised. However, the one gap that is growing is the participation rates of children from low income families.

We then focus on the specific issue of how poverty impacts the ability of young people to access sport. Highlighting successful ideas and research that have increased participation rates amongst children living in poverty.

Then, we critique what is being done in Wales to reduce the barriers that prevent children living in poverty access sport. Despite many good intentions and some pockets of good practice our findings are that as a nation we are not doing enough to overcome the substantial obstacles children, young people and their families currently face.

Our national policy response reeks of ambivalence and this will have dire consequences for the long-term health and wellbeing of many Welsh children and young people. Finally, we attempted to provide some recommendations on what can be done to minimise and mitigate the impact that poverty has on the ability of children and young people's to participate in sport.

Section 2 Children & young people and Poverty

In this section:

- In their definition The Welsh Government states that poverty explicitly includes an “inability to participate in activities that are taken for granted by others in their society”
- Almost one third of children in Wales live in poverty. There are significant numbers of children living in poverty in every community in Wales ([End Child Poverty Coalition](#))
- The Covid 19 pandemic has increased poverty and exacerbated its consequences. This includes parents having to cut back on food for children ([Bevan Foundation](#))

What is poverty

To define, and then make sense, of the term poverty it needs to be understood that it is both a literal and a measurable concept.

The Welsh Government [defines child poverty](#) as

“A long-term state of not having sufficient resources to afford food, reasonable living conditions or amenities or to participate in activities (such as access to attractive neighbourhoods and open spaces) that are taken for granted by others in their society.”

The initial element of this definition is obvious and uncontentious: poverty is about a lack of money (resources) to afford sufficient food or reasonable living conditions. The Welsh Government however takes this a step further, extending the definition to describe poverty as not having sufficient money to take part in activities taken for granted by others in “their” society.

As such the Welsh Governments definition mirrors the definition of poverty developed by Peter Townsend, sociologist and founding member of Child Poverty Action Group. In 1979 he defined poverty as:

“Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong.”

Both definitions highlight that poverty goes beyond not having the resources to meet basic human needs and includes being set outside society by being unable through lack of resources to participate in what is considered normal.

Children and young people unable to participate in sport would, we content, fall under this definition. Sport is both customary, and as we will set out later in this document, actively encouraged for all children and young people.

Poverty can also be considered as something that is measurable. **The House of Commons** [Poverty in the UK: statistics 2021](#) states that:

“In the UK, the headline measures are based on household income. In particular, two commonly used measures are:

- An individual is in relative low income (or relative poverty) if they are living in a household with income below 60% of median household income in that year. This measure essentially looks at inequality between low- and middle-income households.*
- An individual is in absolute low income (or absolute poverty) if they are living in households with income below 60% of the 2010/11 median, uprated for inflation. By using an income threshold that is fixed in time, this measure looks at how living standards of low-income households are changing over time.*
- Income can be measured before or after housing costs have been deducted (BHC or AHC). Poverty levels are generally higher when household incomes are measured AHC, as households at the lower end of the income distribution tend to spend a larger share of their income on housing than higher-income households. Official poverty estimates for the UK are published by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in its annual Households below average income (HBAI) publication.”*

The key measure, generally accepted in a Welsh public policy context, is that if a child lives in a household below 60% of the median UK household income (AHC) then they can be considered living in poverty.¹

Combating poverty

Tackling childhood poverty has been a public policy objective for many years in Wales. In February 2005 the **Welsh Assembly Government** published the strategic document '[A fair future for our children](#)': This committed the Government to

“Halving the rate of child poverty by 2010 and completely eliminating it by 2020”

This is a commitment that has sadly not been met.

The key elements of the strategy were

- reducing income poverty through better job opportunities;*
- ending participation poverty through greater opportunities for children from poor families to access play, sporting, leisure and cultural activities;*
- reducing service poverty through improving access to public services for poor families;*
- capturing and monitoring the extent and nature of child poverty through the use of a wider range of measurements*

These key elements still resonate. They clearly set out that poverty must be tackled through reducing income poverty through employment, and in addition, that society can, and should take

¹ The median weekly household income in the UK is £476 after housing costs, and 60% of this is around £286 (Senedd Research Poverty and supporting low-income households 2021).

steps to mitigate the impact of poverty and this includes ensuring children from poor families can have greater opportunities to access sport.

Poverty in Wales

Using the above measure, latest figures available indicate that 31% of children in Wales are living live in poverty.² Childhood poverty is also everywhere. In every Welsh local authority more than 1-in-5 children live in poverty, highlighting that child poverty is a problem in all our communities.

Poverty is also increasing rapidly in different parts of Wales, with North and West Wales having seen the most dramatic rise in child poverty. Although Cardiff has the highest percentage of children in poverty with 36%, Wrexham is the local authority area with the greatest growth in child poverty over the past five years.

People working full-time in every Welsh local authority had median weekly pay lower than the UK average. 75% of children living in poverty in 2019/20 were in households with at least one working adult - up from 61% in 2014-15. In April 2020 wages in Wales were lower than in all other parts of the UK except for Northern Ireland and North East England, contributing to the relatively high levels of in-work poverty identified by the [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#).

People in Wales have the lowest disposable income in the UK, according to [the Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) \(2019\)](#). The estimated gross disposable household income (GDHI) per head in Wales is £15,754. This means that each person had £15,754 on average, to spend or save after they had paid taxes and received any benefits. While disposable income has risen as a whole in Wales over the past two decades, the rate of growth has been much slower than elsewhere in the UK. Monmouthshire and Newport had the highest disposable income, the Central Valleys the lowest.

Consequences of the Covid 19 pandemic

The Covid pandemic has had a major impact on finances of low-income households. People from low-income households have been most likely to lose their jobs, lose income or to be furloughed since the start of the pandemic. [The Resolution Foundation \(2021\)](#) found that over 40% of the lowest earners had been affected in these ways, double the percentage of the highest earners.

Consequently, the number of people claiming social security benefits has increased considerably. In April 2021 over 125,000 more people in Wales were claiming Universal Credit than at the start of the pandemic. Food banks and the Welsh Government have stepped in to provide additional food to people shielding and those in need, with the Trussell Trust providing over 145,000 emergency food parcels in 2020-21.

In December 2021 [Bevan Foundation](#) research Bevan Foundation identified that

- **nearly four in ten households in Wales are struggling to make ends meet, and do not have enough money to buy anything beyond everyday items**
- **a quarter of Welsh households have seen their income fall during the pandemic, while at the same time living costs have increased for more than four in ten households.**

² [End Child Poverty Coalition May 2021](#)

- **more than one in twenty households with one child, and one in ten households with two children, have cut back on food for children. Given the significant body of evidence that demonstrates the impact of poor nutrition in long-term health, educational attainment and wellbeing it is likely that the impact of the present economic crisis on children will be felt for years to come.**

Section 3 Children & young people and sport

This chapter seeks to give a high-level overview of the current position of children & young people and sport in Wales.

- Sport has many benefits for children and young people
- Only 14-17% of young people aged 11-16 achieve the recommended amount of physical activity
- There are successful approaches to increase participation of children and young people in sport

What is sport?

The [Vision for Sport in Wales](#) is

“The Vision for Sport in Wales is that everyone can have a lifetime enjoyment of sport. We want Wales to be an active nation with as many people as possible inspired to be active through sport.

And when we say everyone, that’s exactly what we mean. From people who don’t see themselves as sporty to people who win medals. Everybody.

We want a Wales where you can play sport at whatever stage of life you’re at, with diverse opportunities that fit in and around your lifestyle.

But ultimately, sport needs to be fun and enjoyable, so you keep coming back – time and time again. “

There are many different definitions of what sport is, however, the **Vision for Sport in Wales** defines it as:

- *“organised sport – that might be your after-school netball match, mountain biking on a Saturday or a gym session*
- *a range of activities like walking, jogging or dance that sometimes is thought of as recreation”*

As such, sport must be seen in the context of Welsh public policy, as embracing, and valuing a wide range of activities including:

- sports such as football, netball, cricket and rugby
- less traditional sports such as kayaking, mountain biking or skateboarding,

- new sports such as parkour³ or breakin⁴.

Our national policy drivers and delivery strategies to get people active through sport must therefore focus on encouraging everyone, including people who are both young and poor, take part in the sporting activity that they find fun. For some this will be running through the November rain to score a try in a school rugby match, for others it will be taking part in a Zumba class in a warm gym. Both are equally valid.

General benefits of sport for children and young people

It is widely accepted that participation in sport has three main benefits to children and young people:

1. It can contribute to health and physical development, with major implications for future health outcomes.
2. It encourages concentration, motivation and other learning skills that can help children and young people achieve positive education and employment outcomes, with important consequences for future wellbeing.
3. It can involve children and young people engaging with each other, thereby helping them build positive relationships with people from their own and different communities, with important consequences for future social cohesion. (Sports Wales)

Sport as physical activity

Sufficient physical activity⁵ is important for maintaining and improving the health of children and young people. Guidelines issued by the four Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland state:

- All children and young people (aged 5-18) should engage in moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity for at least 60 minutes and up to several hours every day.
- Vigorous intensity activities, including those that strengthen muscle and bone, should be incorporated at least three days a week.
- All children and young people should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods.

Number of children who are physically active

The Welsh Government however states that overall, 51% of children aged 3-17 meet the guidelines, however, only 14-17% of young people aged 11-16 achieve the recommended amount of physical activity.⁶

³ <https://parkour.uk/>

⁴ <https://www.ukbreakin.org/>

⁵ Sport is of course only one of many mechanisms through which children and young people engage in physical activity.

⁶ There is some debate to the accuracy of these figures and may indicate an over reporting. In 2018 [The National Assembly for Wales: Health, Social Care and Sport Committee](#) undertook an Inquiry into physical activity of children and young people. The report, Physical Activity of Children and Young People 2019

The [2018 Sport Wales School Sport survey](#) suggest that the participation gap for some under-represented groups is closing:

- **45% of children with a disability or impairment are now taking part in sport three or more times a week (in addition to timetabled PE lessons), up from 40% in 2015. The figure shows an even greater increase when responses from Special Educational Needs schools are added in, taking the figure up to 47%.**
- **The lowest participating ethnic minority group, Asian British, has increased regular participants from 36% to 40%, bringing them closer to the national average.**
- **Meanwhile there looks to be a more stubborn gap between the most and least deprived, with 42% of children from the most deprived households taking part three or more times a week (in addition to timetabled PE lessons), down from 43% in 2015.**

Despite this there is clear evidence of unmet need. *Youth Sport Trust* report [The Class of 2035](#) found that there is a growing demand for more sporting opportunities among young people with the proportion of young people in the UK who claim that they want to do more sport and exercise increasing from 44% in 2014, to 54% by 2020. Such findings point to an unmet demand in terms of sporting opportunity for young people and the need for wider access to multi-sport opportunities across school and community environments.

Sport as a response to the risk of poor wellbeing

Sport also has a significant role in maintaining and improving the wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people such as those with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs are associated with poor educational achievement and the development of a wide range of harmful behaviours, including smoking, increased alcohol consumption, drug use, risky sexual behaviour, violence and crime. ACEs can also contribute towards an increased risk of developing conditions such as diabetes, mental illness, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and premature mortality.

Public Health Wales NHS Trust has published [research](#) on the role of sport in responding to ACEs. The research stated that those working within the sports sector are well placed to support children who may be experiencing ACEs, and an ACE-informed sports approach has the potential to equip sport settings with relevant knowledge and skills to respond to children who experience ACEs or trauma, as well as supporting the ‘whole coach’ experience advocated by **Sport Wales**.

Increasing participation of children and young people in sport

There is now a significant body of evidence, ideas and research highlighting the barriers that are preventing children and young people participating in sport.

Sport Wales has over many years commissioned a wide range of research into why participation of sport varies so much and have identified 5 themes they describe as ‘The five Elements of Engagement’ - Motivation, Confidence, Awareness, Opportunity & Resources and The Experience.

The National Assembly for Wales: Health, Social Care and Sport Committee’s report [Physical Activity of Children and Young People 2019](#) concluded that to increase children’s participation in

highlighted a general lack of data collection on physical activity levels and obesity in childhood in Wales, as well as limitations with the data which is available.

sport, there needs to be improved joint working between schools and local clubs to provide more local sports opportunities where costs are reduced to enable more affordable local opportunities.

A [systematic review](#) funded by the **National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)** by found that the main barriers to voluntary participation in sport for children were **cost, time and location**.

A recurring themes in these reports is the correlation between the relative cost of sport and participation levels. There is however a narrative that often goes unchallenged that the cost of different sport varies but there always is a sport available even for people on low income. The examples often given are running, football, netball and rugby. This may never, and certainly is no longer, the case. Gilbert the sports equipment company for example has indicated a reasonable cost, excluding travel, of someone started taking part in junior rugby is £245 per year. This could be reduced if, for example kit was recycled, as it often is with rugby playing families, but this option is not available to those new to a sport. Cost, is and remains a barrier for any child or young person wanting to participate in any sport.

Youth Sport Trust report

The Youth Sport Trust report [Class of 2035 How sport can empower a generation to build a brighter tomorrow](#). looked in detail at participation of young people in sport.

Engaging young people in sport

The report found that levels of sport engagement and empowerment can be heightened by improved representation of young people in the design and delivery of sporting activities. Young people in the UK demonstrated an increased likelihood to participate in sport if it is designed and/or delivered by their peers. For example, there has been a considerable increase in the proportion of young people who agree that they would play more sport if it was taught by someone their own age, rising from 23% in 2014 to 36% by 2020. This figure is even higher among those with a disability at 46%, further highlighting the role that enhanced representation can have in curating sporting activities that are tailored to the needs of specific groups of young people.

The Youth Sport Trust findings illustrate the importance of developing new approaches to involving children and young people in terms of their engagement with sport policy and delivery, which can help ensure that the sporting experiences of young people are better aligned to the specific needs of their local area.

Use of technology

Contrary to the widely held view that new technology is a negative influence on participation in sport and physical activity. **The Youth Sport Trust** found that new technology can and should be used to engage young people on a level that resonates with them.

“Rather than seeing technology has a barrier or distraction to sport, digital advances need to be utilised to entice engagement with physical activity. Indeed, a growing proportion of young people agree that they would like to use more technology as part of PE lessons, with 45% agreeing in 2020 compared with 37% in 2014. Developing gamification techniques that draw upon experiences from computer games will provide new approaches to encourage sporting activity, as will using data tracking devices to provide more continuous feedback and encouragement based on individually set goals. In addition, the use of augmented and virtual technology will enable schools and pupils in more remote or rural areas to attend/take part in more sports initiatives, such as School Game events.”

Interestingly, **the Youth Sport Trust** research found that children and young people from more affluent backgrounds were far more likely to use new technology as a means of accessing sport and physical activity than their peers from lower social-economic backgrounds, further widening the social divide in participation in sport.

Youth Sport Trust recommendations

Some of the report's recommendations were:

- ***Enable and empower children and young people to engage in the planning and delivery of sport and other physical activities***
- ***Promote the understanding of the role of sport and other physical activities in promoting health and mobility in later life***
- ***Broaden the range of activities beyond team sports - increase the provision of multi-sport opportunities across school and community environment***
- ***Local focus - understand the specific needs of the community and young people within the local area***
- ***Empower teachers to detect and respond to low levels of sport engagement among pupils – through enhanced training and support to increase young people developing a more natural love and enjoyment of sport and help drive longer-term and sustained engagement with physical activity.***
- ***Develop values-led sporting activities to develop specific skillsets (e.g. team building, communication, leadership) which will help skills accumulation for later life.***
- ***Encourage the role of new technology, devices and platforms, and the use of online and digital behaviours to entice sport engagement***
- ***Re-focus the school curriculum to give equal focus to wellbeing, alongside attainment - government policy should focus on enhancing the school curriculum to put the promotion of wellbeing on an equal setting to academic achievement.***

Section 4: Poverty, Sport and Children & Young People

In this section

- **Poverty is associated with reduced participation in sport**
- **Sport is an enabler of social mobility**
- **The biggest barrier to participation amongst children and young people living in poverty is cost**

Youth Sport Trust report [The Class of 2035](#) described clear evidence of unequal levels of confidence in and the value derived from sport across socio-economic groups. Young people from lower socio-economic groups in the UK are the least confident in taking part in physical activity, with 51% of 11-16 year olds in the D and E socio-economic groups rating themselves as confident, compared with 75% in groups A and B.

Those in lower socio-economic groups are also less likely to acknowledge the benefits that sport and exercise can offer, with only 32% of DEs agreeing that doing PE will help them achieve their ambitions in life, compared with 52% of ABs.

[Research](#) by the **London School of Economics Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion** found that inequality based on income, family background and area condition was a huge deterrent to children and young people's involvement in sport and physical activity, primarily but not only, because of extremely low incomes.

[Research](#) by Street Games and the London School of Economics raised similar issues. This research looked at participation in large council estates, including the Gurnos area of Merthyr Tydfil and ethnically diverse inner-city areas

Street Games and LSE key findings included:

- ***The biggest barrier for young people is cost. They like gyms and would go if it wasn't for the cost barrier. They also like the idea of team sports but often there is a fee for participating and kit can become expensive. Parents are generally supportive of involvement in sport and physical activity to motivate their children and them out of trouble, but they rely heavily on schools.***
- ***Poor area conditions have a huge impact on access to sport and physical activity. Income poverty, lack of confidence and motivation, fear of crime, peer pressure, and poor supervision all act as major deterrents.***

- *But community spirit matters, all areas had a strong sense of community, although some were worried about social problems in their areas and report high levels of disorder, antisocial behaviour and crime.*
- *Schools are very important in keeping young people active and good sports programmes with good facilities and an active PE teacher inspires young people. But there is a strong call for more informal sport, games and physical activity to allow more young people, who are not the best performers, to go on playing without worrying about their abilities.*
- *Free provision through youth clubs is important, but parents are invariably worried about area conditions and level of supervision, they often do not want younger children mixing with older children. They are afraid of bad example and negative influences.*
- *Fear dampens enthusiasm for using local parks or sports facilities, and for allowing younger people to attend clubs, and as a barrier to older children joining in positive games.*
- *The definition of local area and community is very narrow, and this limits the extent to which young people will become involved. If sports facilities, clubs and parks are even half a mile away, this may be considered too far, the wrong postcode, or threatening.*
- *Boys look up to sporting role models. Although, young men often play sport only with other males, e.g. football, basketball and gyms. In sharp contrast, girls are far more worried about their image and their figure. There was a clear desire among many girls and young women for special exclusively female activities.*
- *Leaving school is a cliff edge for sport and for general involvement in social activities and clubs. Post-school friends tend to prefer “hanging out”, drinking together, smoking and in many cases taking drugs. Young parenting can also be a limiting factor.*

The [Youth Sport Trust](#) found that;

“With the risk of increased levels of inequality in the UK in the post-pandemic era, it will be vital that the current gap in engagement with sport is closed in the short-term. Indeed, the level of empowerment and self-enhancing that sport can provide, demonstrates that sporting participation has the potential to be a driver of social mobility and increased levels of opportunity across all social groups. However, for this potential to be unlocked, the extent to which income levels shape engagement with sport will need to be addressed.”

Voucher Schemes

Given the long-standing challenges of child poverty in Wales and the increasing negative impact of the cost of living on poorer families, it is not surprising that cost is the biggest disincentive to children and young people taking part in sport and physical activities.

To overcome the cost barrier, sports voucher incentives have been widely implemented across Australia. Five States and Territories implemented sports vouchers, these are given to each child to spend on sport and have a median value of AU\$150 (circa £80) awarded to each child.

[Research](#) by the University into the voucher system of concluded that socio-economic status was associated with additional sports-related expenditure (*how much money parents spend on sport*) and sports participation (*amount of sport that children take part in*)

The academics recommended that sport vouchers should target children in the most disadvantaged areas to promote participation in organised sport and physical activity and overcome financial disadvantage.

Section 5: Current public policy responses

In this section

- **There are some public policy initiatives in Wales to get poorer children and young people engaged in sport**
- **It is unclear how these initiatives align with Welsh Government policy and the Vision for Sport in Wales**

Many local regional and national sports organisation across Wales engage in activities that support and work with young people who live in areas of concentrated economic deprivation, or with groups that are at risk of socio-economic exclusion because of not being in employment education and employment (NEET).

These projects focus on providing targeted short term support to poorer children and young people as a cohort – for example putting on time linked summer activities for children who may be at risk of not having enough food because of not being able to access free school meals, or by using a sporting brand to developing targeted services for young people who are particularly at risk. Example of these include the Ospreys in the Community [Tackle Project](#)

Healthy and Active Fund

In 2017 Welsh Government, Sport Wales and Public Health Wales launched a £5.4m fund that awarded grants to 17 organisations⁷ that actively promoted and enabled healthy activity for one or more of the following groups:

- Children and young people
- People with a disability or long-term illness
- People who are economically inactive or who live in areas of deprivation
- Older people and those around the age of retirement from work

Evaluations on the projects have not been completed, however, except for a project delivered by Street Games it is unclear how or if the projects funded specifically tackle the issue of children and young people, poverty and sport.

This report offers no criticism of the above projects and recognise they undoubtedly bring huge benefits to these communities and should be commended. The focus of this report is however focused on what can be done to support children and young people who live in poverty regularly access a range of sport that is available to others. Important as they are large project don't enable the teenager in Carmarthenshire take part in slalom canoeing or for the primary school child in Wrexham to just join the local cricket club.

⁷ The Pollen Shop Ltd is a volunteer (unpaid) member of a consortium of organisations that received a grant from the Healthy and Active Fund to develop a national Sporting Memories project.

Welsh Government Pupil Development Grant (PDG)

The Welsh Government Pupil Development Grant (PDG) helps to fund a child's school uniform and equipment, plus items for outside school activities, where families are on low incomes. The PDG is available to all schools in Wales. Learners currently eligible for free school meals can apply for the grant of £125 per learner, and £200 for those learners entering year 7, recognising the increased costs associated with starting secondary school.

The grant provides assistance to families on low incomes for the purchase of:

- School uniform including coats and shoes
- School sports kit including footwear
- Uniform for enrichment activities, including but not limited to, scouts; guides; cadets; ***martial arts; sports***; performing arts or ***dance***
- Equipment e.g., school bags and stationery
- Specialist equipment where new curriculum activities begin such as design and technology
- Laptops or tablets
- Equipment for out of school hours trips such as outdoor learning e.g., waterproofs.

Families who are eligible for free school meals can submit a claim if they have a child in primary school from reception to year 6 or secondary school from year 7 to year 11.

All looked after children qualify for the grant, whether they receive free school meals or not. Pupils with no recourse to public funds entering the above years in the 2021-22 school year are also entitled to assistance under this funding. Pupils who receive free school meals due to transitional protection arrangements do not qualify for this funding.

Families are only entitled to claim once per child, per school year. Funding for the 2021 to 2022 scheme will close on 30 June 2022. The 2022 to 2023 scheme will open in the Summer of 2022.

The **Welsh Government** accepted in principle recommendation 16 in the Senedd HSCS Committee Report into the Physical Activity of Children and Young People March 2019 that

“The Welsh Government should explore how the Pupil Development Grant could be utilised to help address the deprivation gap in physical activity levels”.

In their response, the Welsh Government stated that it is not acceptable for children's success to be determined by their social or economic circumstances and highlighted that the PDG has been used by some schools to promote sporting activities; such as after-school clubs, transport to the local swimming pool, Bike-ability skills and outdoor education, incorporating residential visits.

The Pupil Development Grant may have had a limited positive role in overcoming some of the cost barriers to children and young people accessing sports and physical activity but has very significant its limitations. It provides a wide range of assistance to families on low incomes but is not specifically targeted on access to sport and physical activity, it is also primarily school-based and therefore does not cover wider community sports and activities.

It also does not

- in essence, spirit or design reflect the Vision for Sport in Wales, specifically, that sport should be about fun and not the worthy sounding term “enrichment”. The grant remains clearly focused on educational attainment and attendance and ensuring rightly our children have the equipment to participate in school life.

- Reflect the reality of how children and young people engage in sport. One grant per year awarded at a set time for an academic is clunky and requires parental planning.

Curriculum

The Welsh Government has also emphasised children and young people's physical development in the new curriculum. The Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) have been developed around progression in learning, with significant consideration given to physical development. The intended aim of the new curriculum, through the mechanism of Achievement Outcomes, will be to enable schools to consult with learners on the choice and range of physical activities available to them, the learning outcomes specify the need for children and young people to experience:

- outdoor learning to support physical health and well-being;
- a range of ongoing, daily opportunities to be physically active;
- opportunities to be physically active in a variety of environments (including indoor; outdoor; different surfaces; heights; in and around water);
- a range of physical activities, through fun and engaging approaches to learning

The impact of this positive focus on children and young people's physical health and well-being cannot yet be measured at this early stage in the implementation of the new curriculum.

The PAWB fund

The PAWB fund was created by the FAW to support young people to access regular football opportunities using money collected at Welsh football internationals.

This fund can be applied for, on behalf of any young player, to support and assist them with accessing football opportunities and/or equipment.

The application is open to 5 – 18 year-olds living in Wales and will be decided by a national panel that will use the application information to assess each case.

The following items are eligible for support through the fund:

- ***Grassroots club or FAW academy membership fees (playing kit included in these costs)***
- ***Equipment***
- ***Football boots / Shin pads / Goalkeeper gloves***
- ***Sport hijabs***
- ***Impairment specific equipment e.g. sports goggles***
- ***Travel costs e.g. train, bus or taxi costs to training and match venues***

The fund will support children and families in most need and will prioritise those who are

- ***Accessing Free School Meals***
- ***Accessing or eligible for income support***
- ***In foster care, Looked After Children, asylum seekers or refugees***

The fund will support recipients on an annual basis to ensure they can access regular football opportunities.

This excellent project only has a total budget of £5,000 and has supported 59 families in 2021/22

Section 6 conclusion

In this section

- **The current public policy response lacks ambition**
- **Involve children and young people living in poverty to design and develop sports and physical activity programmes**
- **Where necessary financially support children and young people to access**

Whilst highlighting a complex picture of influences and impacts, research has clearly found that the main barriers to children and young people accessing sport and other physical activity include **cost, time and location**.

Access to, and participation in, sport and other physical activity for the children and young people of Wales, is essential for literally the well-being of future generations. The Welsh Government has acknowledged this in both policy and legislation, but without a targeted commitment to overcoming the barriers to taking part, children and young people from low income backgrounds across Wales, will fall even further behind.

Recommendation

To increase the engagement of children and young people from low income families across Wales in sport, the Welsh Government, public bodies, sports organisations and third sector should target programmes and initiatives which:

1. Actively include children and young people living in poverty in the design and delivery of sports and physical activity programmes. Listen to what they say, and act on it.
2. Reduce costs to enable more affordable local opportunities. Promote and value good practice examples where sports have actively sought to reduce the cost of entry.
3. Where necessary financially support families to pay for children and young people to access the sporting structures that already exist. Consider the introduction of a voucher system to support participation.
4. Focus on local area-based activity and build on local community structures. This must target areas of concentrated poverty but also enable poorer people living in other community's access support.
5. Encourage a broad spectrum of physical activity, beyond traditional sports, have more organised but informal games, including outdoor pursuits. Invest more sports; jogging, cycling, swimming, skateboarding, walking, which can be organised as group activities or on an informal basis.
6. Target cultural change in sporting environments through staff and volunteer training and support, specifically on avoiding peer disapproval and stereotyping.

Although the current challenges can appear insurmountable, the means to change the future, so that all children and young people in Wales, regardless of their circumstances, are physically active and engaged in sport is both tangible and attainable.