Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee:- Participation in Sport in Disadvantaged Areas

StreetGames additional evidence submission: 22nd June 2022

As part of our evidence session, we agreed to share additional information around access to digital sport and physical offers for lower socio-economic groups, and information around access to online booking systems. Below you will find links to a number of research documents and the key findings related to digital access.

- StreetGames conducted it's own research in 2020 and published our Youth Voice Report. The research questions focused on giving young people a voice during the coronavirus pandemic, to learn the different ways the situation may be affecting them. Page 3 of this report highlights some of the feedback from young people around accessing activity online – *only 26% of the young people asked took part in online fitness activities.* Young people told us that this was due to a number of factors including; limited access to shared devices, limited data plans, no access to wi-fi at home, no private space to exercise and limited equipment to enable them to take part.
- In 2021, StreetGames published a COVID-19 impact report, specifically focusing on the impact on young people living in low income areas in Wales. Page 9 of this report describes the digital challenges faced by young people living in low income areas, and the considerations for sport and physical activity providers to ensure their offers are accessible. This report references the Welsh Government's Digital Inclusion Forward Look: towards a digitally confident Wales report, and the results of the Children's Commissioner for Wales' survey of schools and colleges, shared in the Getting Online January 2021 briefing note. This indicated that more than 52% reported there were some households without access to the internet and in 46% there were some households with insufficient data allowances28. 12% of schools had at least 20% of learners without access. Colleges reported a range of 0-20% of learners without access to devices. Having shared, rather than exclusive, access to a device is common - more than half of learners were sharing access in 36% of schools or colleges.
- Catch-22 indicate that It is no longer just access that is the problem in 'digital deprivation' i.e. simply having a device isn't good enough, it has to be fit for purpose. For example, cheaper data packages aren't sufficiently powerful enough now to support HD Zoom calls as the bandwidth requirements are far greater. This is particularly true for outdated websites that are data inefficient. This typically includes Local Authority and Government websites, many of which are used to book places on sport and physical activity sessions. This is particularly relevant in coastal/rural locations which may already have poor connectivity, exasperating the problem if the device isn't fit for purpose. Where household budgets before the pandemic were already stretched, having to now add expensive broadband packages to the list of bills has caused some to prioritise this over other bills such as gas/food.
- Information from The Office of National Statistics Exploring the UKs Digital Divide paper further demonstrates the disparities in access to the internet and devices, and digital skills levels. On the following page, we have highlighted a few key points for reference from this report.
    - *Figure 14* shows the percentage of working age adults who are internet non-users by economic activity status
    - *Figure 15* demonstrates that nearly all (99%) of households earning £40k+ have internet access compared to just 51% amongst households earning between £6-£10k
    - *Figure 17* indicates the most common reasons for not having internet access in the household.
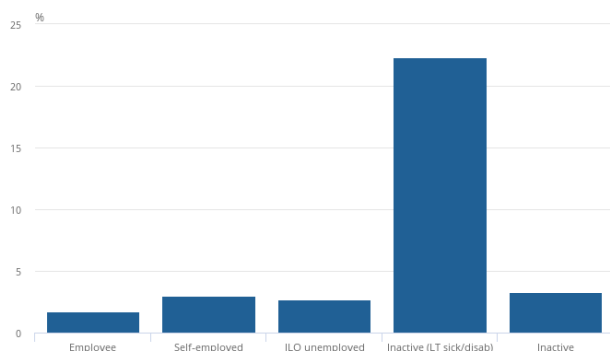
Figure 14: Among working age adults, a higher proportion of the economically inactive are internet non-users than those with other economic activities
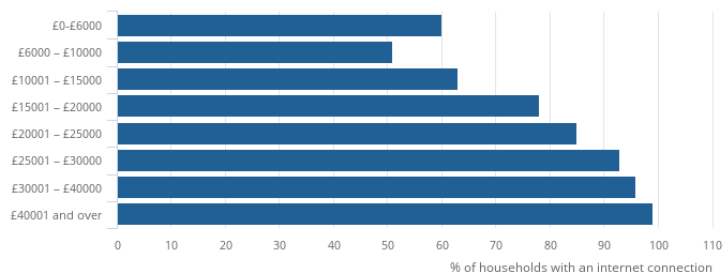
Percentage of working age adults who are internet non-users by economic activity status, UK, 2018

Source: Office for National Statistics

Figure 15: The percentage of households with an internet connection increases with income
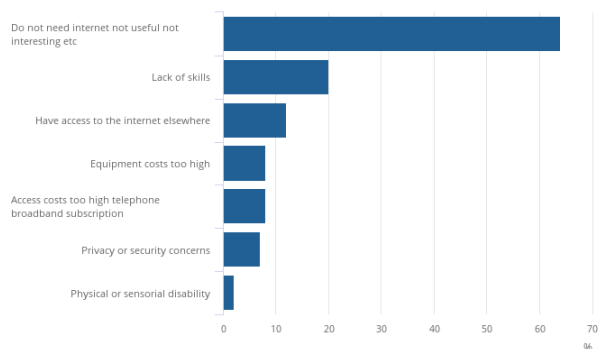
Percentage of households with internet connection by annual household income band, Scotland, 2014

Source: Carnegie Trust

Figure 17: The most common reason for not having internet access in the household is a perceived lack of need, followed by a lack of skills

Percentage of households by reason for not having household internet access, Great Britain, 2017

Source: Office for National Statistics - Internet Access, Opinions and Lifestlye Survey (OPN)

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