

Ymchwiliad i weithgarwch corfforol ymhlith plant a phobl ifanc

Inquiry into physical activity of children and young people

Ymateb gan Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili

Response from Caerphilly County Borough Council

Inquiry into physical activity of children and young people

- **What do we know about physical activity levels in children in Wales? How robust is the data on this issue?**

Each year the data is showing that physical activity in Wales is ever increasing however there is still a great way to go to hit the national target of 90% that has been set by Welsh Government. Children up to the age of 11/12 are known to be more physically active than those aged between 12-16. When reviewing data the gender gap only becomes significantly different when they are aged 13/14 and boys are more physically active and engaged in sport. Levels of participation are lower in deprived areas than that of affluent areas so for example, Rhymney produces lower participant numbers than that of Caerphilly. School Sport Survey data gives headline figures but no useful information for us as development team to actually make an impact on these figures. We have therefore designed a data collection tool which gives us up to date local knowledge.

The data we receive is from the SSS but even this data is not as robust as it should be due to it being completed at the same time of each year making certain sports seem more desirable and in 2/3 year cycles. The surveys can also be questioned to how accurately they are completed due to the way questions are asked, amount of time taken and the percentage of each school pupils completing them. surveys which are heavily used for evidence based work, such as SSS are outdated within completion and return of data reports. This is due to the time it takes to accumulate the data and is heavily dependent on the time of year it is completed. In order for this data to be more accurate and valuable it would need to be undertaken at least 3 times a year. In addition to this, data reports such as SSS need to be completed by every child and not a % sample in order to gain further robust data.

Typically there are lower levels of participation for those who have a disability. However, those who attend mainstream school will be given fewer opportunities than children attending special schools. From experience, we missed out on a key opportunity to report on this data through the SSS however, Trinity Fields were not approached and Sport Wales had not considered how this could be achieved.

- **Differences in gender-based attitudes towards, and opportunities for, participation in physical activity in Wales.**

Gender based attitudes towards physical activity can be dependent in their exposure to various sporting and physical activity opportunities. In general females become disengaged with physical activity from a young age and this is down to body confidence, ability and the activities they are offered. Such things as social running and dance have helped to engage females back into physical activity. Sport Wales needs to advocate a culture change to steer away from labeling sports as 'male' or 'female' sports. Whilst there has been some significant improvements in the provision of female sport there are still more opportunities for males to take part in sport than females. The increased

coverage of female sport by the media is having a positive impact however there is still a long way to go.

We need to encourage both males and females to become leaders and coaches in varied sports, will also hopefully assist with engaging more children in more sports, regardless of gender or sport. Within Cricket and Golf attitudes are changing and more opportunities are being presented for Women within both sports to take part competitively and non-competitively. Increased funding is being made available by the National Governing Bodies to increase female participation however; money alone will not provide the solution to the issue. Also not all sporting pathways enable both genders to continue playing the sport they love. An example of this is the netball pathway. Males are able to play throughout primary school and U11's, however once they reach secondary school the pathway no longer allows them participate within the sport. It's a fact that more males than females who have a disability take part in sport and physical activity. This is due to the fact that more males have a disability as opposed to those of females. The opportunities that we provide within Caerphilly however are the same for both females and males.

- **The extent to which Welsh Government policies are aimed at whole populations and/or particular groups, and what impact that approach has on addressing health inequalities.**

Strategies such as 'Creating an Active Wales' and 'Change 4 Life' are key in approaching health inequalities. Change 4 Life can have an impact by educating the population about the importance of being physically active, healthy eating etc. It also provides guidance /activities for various populations, such as pregnant women and families (e.g. Walk4Life) 'Creating an Active Wales' is also central to partnership working between various organisations and creating a joined up approach to tackling health inequalities and supporting their vision in creating a One Wales.

The wellbeing of future generations act will have a positive impact on the whole population once all the affected bodies are able to align themselves to achieve the outcomes however the delivery and impact will vary depending on the demographic of the individual areas. We have a responsibility to ensure that the public are aware of what impact these can/are having on people in Wales

- **Barriers to increasing the levels of physical activity among children in Wales, and examples of good practice in achieving increases in physical activity, and in engagement with hard to reach groups, within Wales, the UK and internationally.**

Attitudes of parents and coaches, financial issues, transport issues and a lack of time are having an increased impact on participation. Other interests such as game consoles, mobile phones and the influence of social media on peer groups are also proving to be obstacles needing to be overcome. Parents are more reluctant to allow their children to just go out and play due to community safety (antisocial behavior, lighting). A way of getting over this is by taking the physical activity sessions to the young people however this can quickly become unsustainable.

An example of good practice in engaging hard to reach groups is the 'Positive Future' programme that has been rolled out within Caerphilly Borough that target children within deprived areas and reducing anti-social behavior through sporting activities.

A lack of facilities and lack of finance are the two stronger barriers for those who have a disability. We are fortunate where we have appropriate facilities and access to these; however we place a

small charge on activities in order to keep the opportunities sustainable. We also offer some 'Disability' events for free including Disability 6 Nations and Disability Swimming Gala.

A good example of increasing physical activity in children is the 'Daily Mile' which is ever increasing in school settings. This is a good model which can be adopted into the community (similar to junior park run). A question we keep asking ourselves is; how do we engage children in sport and make them see the importance of it with everything else they have going on?

- **Physical activity guidelines and how we benchmark physical fitness in children.**

We have previously worked towards the Sport Wales guideline of encouraging secondary school children to take part in 60 minutes of exercise 5 times a week, and now Sport Wales are moving towards the hooked on sport figure which is taking part in activity 3 times a week or more, however we don't currently benchmark this as we are only recording school participation. Conversely adult participation levels require 30 minutes of Physical activity, five times a week.

- **Measurement, evaluation and effectiveness of the Welsh Government's programmes and schemes aimed at promoting physical activity of children.**

The target that has been set to get 90% of secondary school children to be participating in PA through 5x60 by 2020 was very ambitious, especially when budgets have been cut. The 5x60 / school sport programme isn't a true reflection of physical activity levels of children in secondary schools. The programme has become too target driven over the past few years (with ever increasing targets) and needs to be revised. Coupled with a continuous reduction in funding there has never been a reduction in targets. A more of a focused approach needs to be taken where it isn't focus on the mass participation levels but focus on those who don't engage in any physical activity at all. In primary school settings, the Dragon Sport programme also became dated and measurements were flawed. When this programme transitioned into Dragon Multiskills, the training that was provided wasn't suitable and was misunderstood. This was also rolled out in a rushed manner (dictated by financial years) which then affected the buy in from schools to embrace the new programme. Play to Learn was a good resource, however was short-sighted in its approach towards physical development in foundation phase. Targets set to ensure that it was rolled out to all schools across Wales affected the way it was embedded in schools and community settings. This common theme across various programmes and initiatives over the years. The 'Daily Mile' is being embraced by schools with no resources and training required. Recent evidence from areas within the UK clearly shows it has a great impact on physical activity and fitness levels of children in primary schools. This has been embraced by schools due to no cost, all abilities can be engaged and there have been no heavy targets or stipulations made on the delivery methods.

Surveys are reliable to a certain extent but they need to be completed on a regular basis so it provides a continual insight, unlike the School Sport Survey which is every 3 years.

- **Value for money of Welsh Government spending to promote exercise in children.**

The money needs to be given directly to LA's/consortiums as they are the experts in their field and know exactly what is needed in their local areas. There are numerous national projects where funding could have been allocated more efficiently if Welsh Government were to directly fund

delivery rather than a middle tier commissioning partner i.e. Sport Wales. Currently there are many organisations being given funding to deliver on similar aims and objectives.

Conversely, Welsh Government directly fund Disability Sport Wales, consequently they are able to directly fund local delivery.

- **The role of schools, parents and peers in encouraging physical activity, and the role of Sport Wales, NHS Wales and Public Health Wales in improving levels of physical activity.**

Schools have an integral part in increasing physical activity; however I feel that they have so many other demands within the national curriculum that they need to meet, sport sometimes is put at the back of the pile. This is due to the lack of resources that they have especially within primary schools that limit them to have an effective impact on PA. Parents and peers should encourage PA, however I still feel that a high amount need to be educated on healthy eating and the importance PA has. With regards to Sport Wales currently their role is to distribute the money to LA's and other organisations. Currently NHS Wales and Public Health don't have a direct impact; however this link is crucial in getting more people activity and hitting everyone's agenda of a healthier and fitter Wales. At the moment primary schools lack PE specialists which is highlighted not just through attendance at the programmes of what we deliver but also the quality of the participants.

The support of parents is key for those who have a disability as without their support the children and young people would be unable to attend sessions. Schools also present key opportunities, so for example Trinity Fields provides a plethora of different opportunities for their students whether through events or their school programme. SW doesn't necessarily have a direct impact on DSW and the work that we complete. We also don't have any links with NHS or PHW however this is something that could be considered for the future.