

**Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol ar Atal iechyd gwael - gordewdra](#)**

**This response was submitted to the [Health and Social Care Committee](#) consultation on [Prevention of ill health - obesity](#)**

**OB16 : Ymateb gan: Colegau Cymru | Response from: Colleges Wales**

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## Health and Social Care Committee

Senedd  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

Dear Health and Social Care Committee,

### **ColegauCymru response to Senedd Health and Social Care Committee inquiry into the prevention of ill health – obesity**

ColegauCymru is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to this Health and Social Care Committee inquiry. ColegauCymru is an education charity which promotes the public benefit of further education (FE) in Wales. We believe that all learners should have the right to world-class education delivered in a safe, diverse and inclusive setting and within a sector which supports the wider community, employers and the economy. ColegauCymru's Active Wellbeing Strategy (available [here](#)) supports colleges in improving emotional, social and physical wellbeing within the sector, promoting both healthier college communities and a workforce fit for future employment. Active Wellbeing provides ColegauCymru and member colleges with the opportunity to make a difference to the future health, wellbeing and prosperity of learners, communities and Wales as a nation.

The challenge for the FE sector in Wales when considering prevention of ill health (obesity) is closely aligned to the age groups involved and decreasing levels of activity. When combined with other social factors, and the transition from school to college, there are numerous barriers to activity and subsequently better health outcomes. There is also opportunity for WG to focus more on medium term interventions with this age group developing better health among young adults.

Some key areas to address would include:

- Re-engagement with those young people who have stopped participating in physical activity and sport during their teenage years, particularly young women and girls – typically between the ages of 14-16 years.
- Greater recognition of the health risks of young people being “inactive” and the longer-term impact of obesity in this age group.
- Utilising insight from European countries where greater value is placed on physical education and physical activity levels between the ages of 6-14 years.
- Supporting the FE sector in building on successful Active Wellbeing project delivery that promotes increased activity and better mental health among FE learners.

Currently age 14 - 16 is often seen as a cut-off point, particularly for young women and girls to stop participating in sport and physical activity, factors such as time, lack of confidence and enjoyment of PE being cited as factors. Insight from Sport Wales funded research in 2015 and 2018 indicated that as many as 50% of female learners in some vocational areas indicated they took part in “no current

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activity". This is supported by more recent research that shows there is also a 10% gender gap in levels of activity between boys, and girls at the age of 16 upon leaving school.

There is evidence to indicate that the quality of physical education in schools, particularly in Primary, has a long-term impact on obesity health in later life. In Wales, declining physical activity levels have reached a crisis point, resulting in heightened rates of non-communicable diseases and in turn increasing the chance of developing health conditions like heart disease and diabetes. Obesity has the potential to impact heavily on the future workforce, both in terms of fitness to work and the economic loss presented by sickness absence. Facilitating a culture that promotes more physical activity from a young age, and at the workplace and in the workforce, and taking a preventative approach can help to not only support individuals' wellbeing, but also help mitigate future health burden on the Welsh economy.

In April 2024, with support from Taith funding, members of ColegauCymru's Active Wellbeing Strategic Group, our partners Sport Wales, Street Games and National sporting governing bodies, visited Slovenia, one of the most active nations in Europe. There, they witnessed a more positive approach to physical activity and sport, visiting several key strategic projects in Slovenia to understand how they get their nation moving; and experience the benefits movement brings and how this can be implemented in Wales. Since the 1970s, Slovenia has promoted regular activity among its population resulting in healthier and more economically active adults.

In Wales, the statutory amount of physical education is less than in some other European countries. In Slovenia, young people currently have three hours a week dedicated to sports in their timetables, fostering a culture of participation. The [SLOfit programme](#) is a unique national system monitoring the healthy physical development of children and youth since 1987. With the scheme now in its second generation, young people aged 6 to 19 undergo mandatory national annual fitness testing and the resulting data is used to inform public policy and national health and education strategies. Those tests, supported by dedicated PE lessons from primary age, have resulted in a culture of physical activity that is taken into adulthood. This policy has built a solid baseline of active wellbeing in the population with a positive impact on general mental health and levels of fitness.

Since 2014, ColegauCymru has led FE colleges in running a range of interventions supporting active wellbeing to promote better levels of physical activity and connection with mental health. The ColegauCymru Active Wellbeing project (funded by Sport Wales) works across 11 FE colleges to tackle inequality and currently reaches 5,000-6,000 learners every year with a focus on the less active, female learners, those with additional learning needs, 14-16 programmes, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

FE Colleges are currently able to access a range of funding and support from Welsh Government and other sources to deliver mental health and wellbeing services for learners. The Welsh Government currently invests £4million per year into the FE sector to address these challenges and this funding is being used in a range of ways. A simple change in guidance has enabled colleges to include active wellbeing as a preventative approach to better wellbeing and it would be welcome to see a similar approach taken to tackling ill health and obesity.

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Within the sector many of those young people most affected by social problems and inactivity are experiencing new sports and activity to try and re engage with better lifestyle habits. This year, in Mental Health Week Health, ColegauCymru hosted its fifth FE Multi-Sport event at Pembrey Country Park. The Duathlon is an opportunity for all learners and staff in FE settings to participate in a multisport event at a range of levels. With over 40% of participants having additional learning needs (ALN), the Duathlon provides a fully inclusive approach to sport in FE. This year we welcomed over 450 learners, including 150 learners with ALN, from 8 colleges and 14 campuses across Wales.

It was pleasing to hear that committee members would like to visit one of our member colleges in the Autumn to witness some of the great work taking place. We would welcome any further opportunities to consult with the committee and to share insight on the challenges and solutions provided by working with the FE sector.

Cofion gorau,



**Kelly Edwards**  
Interim Chief Executive ColegauCymru

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