

Overview of points to support Disability Sport Wales' oral evidence to the Health and Social Care Committee

January 2025



Overview

- Twenty-one percent (21%) of people in Wales identify or are identified as 'disabled'. There is a disparity in the data held about numbers of disabled children in Wales. The 2021 Census identified that 8% of children in Wales are 'disabled', The National Survey of Wales reports 12% of parents of primary school aged children identified that their child/children has/have additional needs; for secondary school aged children this is 16%.
- Data highlights that disabled children and young people are more likely to be obese than non-disabled children and young people, and the risk increases with age (Gatineau, 2014). Children aged 2 – 15 with Limiting Long-Term Illness (LLTI) are 35% more likely to be obese than children without LLTI (Health Survey for England, 2006 – 2010).
- Additional health and social risks for disabled children who are overweight or obese include reduction in mobility, increased fatigue, increased pain, incidence of pressure sores, depression and social isolation (Liou et al., 2005; cited in Gatineau, 2014).
- Activity Alliance (2024) commissioned State of Life to examine the wellbeing benefit to disabled people, and wider society, of disabled people being more physically active (separating out light, moderate and vigorous activity).

[https://www.activityalliance.org.uk/assets/000/005/094/Activity Alliance Social Value Report Exec Summary FINAL original.pdf](https://www.activityalliance.org.uk/assets/000/005/094/Activity_Alliance_Social_Value_Report_Exec_Summary_FINAL_original.pdf)

Impact of disability-focused social determinants on obesity

- Multiple factors will impact the higher proportion and greater risk of obesity to disabled children and young people (and percentages vary linked to impairment profile – but it should be noted that there is limited research from the UK and Wales). Reduced access to inclusive physical activity (including sport) is one significant component.
- In Wales the School Sport Survey (2022) identified that 35% of disabled pupils participated in organised sport outside of the curriculum more than three times a week (compared to 40% of non-disabled children; and 42% of disabled pupils do no frequent activity (less than once a week) (compared to 35% of non-disabled children).
 - This may be because (multiple factors):
 - *Limited school transport* available flexibly at the end of the school day reduces the likelihood of disabled children and young people accessing after school sport.
 - *Inaccessible transport* (where a family or personal car is not available) limits access to clubs and sessions locally
 - Only 60% of *schools* in Wales identified that they have equipment available within the school environment which enables the inclusion of disabled pupils to be active and/or play sport (School Sport Survey, 2022)

Gatineau, M. (2014). **Obesity and disability: Children and young people**. Public Health England, <https://www.blackpooljsna.org.uk/Documents/Developing-Well/PHE-obesity-and-disability-child-and-young-people-19-02-14.pdf>

Liou TH, Pi-Sunyer FX, Laferrere B. (2005). **Physical disability and obesity**. Nutrition Review, 63(10), pp321–31 (cited in Gatineau, 2014).

Sport Wales (2022). **School Sport Survey**. <https://www.sport.wales/research-and-insight/school-sport-survey/everyone/>

Activity Alliance, (2024). **Social value of disabled people's physical activity**. State of Life: London

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- Not all *facilities* which host activities are accessible to everyone (depending on an individual's functional ability and the equipment used to access sport)
- Cost of equipment; club/gym membership; court, hall or pitch hire; transport; etc
- (Although improving) there *are fewer accessible natural* (paths, etc) *or local play* (playgrounds) *environments* available to disabled adults, children and young people.
- Disabled people's *perceptions* (or the perceptions of disabled children, young people and adults' personal assistants, parents and/or support staff) that physical activity (including sport) is not something which is for disabled people.

Examples of success in Wales

- Health Disability Activity Pathway (formerly the Health Disability Sport Pathway) (<https://www.disabilitysportwales.com/en-gb/programmes/health-disability-activity-pathway>)
- Get Out, Get Active (GOGA)
 - GOGA Programmes: <https://www.disabilitysportwales.com/en-gb/programmes/goga> and <http://www.getoutgetactive.co.uk/>
 - Call to Action: https://www.disabilitysportwales.com/download_file/view/b39bf675-1359-4d4f-8624-ce658bb9543e/257
 - Evaluation of Phase 2: https://www.disabilitysportwales.com/download_file/ef403498-a8a0-4d51-ae43-513e5596a83f/257

Gaps/Areas for improvement in existing policy and regulatory frameworks

- That prevalence data from the child measurement programme for Wales includes disabled children as a specific group
- Investment into future research which examines the relationship between disabled children and young people and factors which link to obesity or being overweight.
- Focus on promoting health **equity** for disabled people by making explicit reference, and taking positive action, to identify actions and interventions which focus on the conditions which lead to obesity within communities of disabled people.