

John Griffiths AC /AM
Y Gweinidog Diwylliant a Chwaraeon
Minister for Culture and Sport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Christine Chapman AM
Chair
Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay

Christine.chapman@wales.gov.uk

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Dear Christine,

I welcome the Committee's report into participation levels in sport in Wales. The report has raised important issues and will help to reinforce the important links and synergy that exists between sport and physical activity. The recommendations will contribute to improving the overall health of the nation.

As well as responding to the recommendations, I would also like to highlight some other work Welsh Government has recently put in place. This is a product of joint working between my officials, officials from the Department for Education and Skills and Sport Wales. The Physical Literacy Programme for Schools (PLPS) is being trialled in secondary schools and their feeder primaries to ensure that young people are physically literate. This is a vitally important step as it helps them to become and remain interested and involved in sport. My comments on the recommendations are as follows:

Recommendation 1. *We recommend that the Minister publishes the joint delivery plan produced by Sport Wales and Public Health Wales, along with a timetable for its implementation. This should include agreed outcomes by which the success of the plan will be measured.*

Response: Accept. Officials are preparing an action plan for increasing physical activity (including participation in sport) which will include actions from the joint delivery plan produced by Sport Wales and Public Health Wales and which will be published shortly.

Financial Implications: None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 2. *We recommend that the Minister undertakes a review of all existing sources of data that measure participation levels in sport, including the methodology used in Sport Wales's surveys. The Minister's review should focus on addressing the concerns around the lack of data on how deprivation, demographics, protected characteristics and cultural barriers impact on participation levels. Any improvements that relate to the work of Sport Wales should be reflected in its future annual Remit Letters.*

Response: Accept. Recent discussions at official level within Welsh Government have focused upon the need to ensure that data collection provides evidential support for the development of future policy. My officials are fully engaged in this process, as are representatives from Sport Wales and Public Health Wales. I acknowledge also that there are some areas of research that can be improved so that we can get a clearer picture on the cultural barriers that prevent participation in sport for example. Within this year's remit letter to Sport Wales I have highlighted the need to for them to work with partners across the sector, in order that we adopt a more collaborative approach when determining what to survey.

Financial Implications: None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 3. *In relation to BME communities, we recommend that the Minister works with Sport Wales and relevant organisations to identify alternative and more effective means of data collection on levels of participation in sport within these communities.*

Response: Accept. I have asked my officials to work with Sport Wales in order that more effective data can be collected amongst the BME communities which report on levels of participation in sport. I have also asked Sport Wales to continue to develop the work of the BME Forum and to consider evaluating a group of pioneer projects that can provide evidence for what works in terms of encouraging greater participation in sport within BME Communities.

Financial Implications: None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 4. *We were concerned to hear about the lack of BME Physical Education teachers in Wales. We recommend that the Welsh Government gives further consideration to addressing this.*

Response. Accept in principle. This is an area for the Minister for Education to consider and I will raise this matter with him.

Financial Implications: None identified.

Recommendation 5. *We recommend that the Minister works with Sport Wales to define and publish the outcomes by which the success of its Community Sport Strategy and Child Poverty Strategy will be measured. We further recommend that robust arrangements are*

put in place to monitor and evaluate the success of these Strategies, and to understand their impact on participation levels.

Response. Accept. Sport Wales have adopted an RBA (Results Based Accounting) approach to these strategies, which has enabled them to define outcomes and robust outcome indicators, the delivery of which will be regularly evaluated. They will be analysing the delivery of both strategies and their impact on participation levels and I will write to the Chair of the Communities Equality and Local Government Committee with the key findings of that evaluation.

Financial Implications: None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 6. *We recommend that the Minister works with Sport Wales to put in place a programme to identify and subsequently address the barriers to participation in sport that are specific to people from BME backgrounds. This should include undertaking research to better understand what these barriers are.*

Response. Accept. I have asked Sport Wales to focus on these areas and I am pleased to say that action is already being taken. Within this year's remit letter I have asked Sport Wales to develop their work involving the BME Forum which involves working on barriers which prevent participation. Whilst the Sport Wales School Sport survey indicated an increase in levels of frequency in participation in sport across the board, it also highlighted some continuing challenges. The participation gap between boys and girls, a lack of participation by boys and girls from BME Communities and the need for more participation in deprived communities are of particular note.

Financial Implications: None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 7. *We recommend that the Minister publishes an action plan setting out how he intends to improve participation levels among people in BME communities. This should include a set of measureable outcomes.*

Response: Accept. I am pleased to be able to inform the Committee that concrete action in this important area is already being taken. Sport Wales' current 'Calls for Action' grant is investing £3m to tackle inequalities within sport and £1.5m of National Lottery funding will fund projects encouraging more people from BME backgrounds, with disabilities and more children from deprived communities to participate more regularly. A further £1.5m will be dedicated to projects that can generate positive action to encourage more young women and girls to play sport. Sport Wales have also developed relationships with partners and local operational groups based in Swansea, Cardiff and Newport whose aim is to challenge, scrutinise and make recommendations to help overcome low participation rates in BME Communities.

Financial Implications: None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 8. *We recommend the Minister ensures that further work is undertaken to identify ways to encourage girls to participate in sport. This should include research into the types of sport or activities that appeal specifically to girls, and the factors affecting their participation.*

Response. Accept. Sport Wales have a considerable amount of research on what motivates women and girls to participate in sport. This has led them into introducing their "What Moves You" programme which seeks to develop a different approach to promoting sport to women and girls and working more with governing bodies of sport through this approach. Encouraging women and girls to take part in sport remains an area of high priority. The current 'Calls for Action' grant mentioned in my response to Recommendation 7 will also have a significant impact.

Financial Implications: None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 9. *We recommend that the Minister works with the Minister for Local Government and Government Business to assess the impact of the reductions in local authority budgets on sport and leisure services, in particular on access and affordability.*

Response. Accept. I work closely with the Minister for Local Government and Business and I have written to all local authorities in Wales requesting that they consider carefully on how they provide leisure services in their respective areas in light of their reduced budgets. I also encouraged them to consult with sports clubs and organisations that use their facilities prior to making any decisions involving cuts in leisure provision. I meet on a regular basis with the Welsh Local Government Association and the impact of the reductions in local authority budgets on sport and leisure services is an area which is regularly discussed. Last year I announced the Capital Loan Scheme which will offer local authorities the opportunity to bid for an interest free loan to develop new sports provision in their areas, pilot projects will commence in 2015.

Financial Implications: None.

Recommendation 10. *We recommend that the Minister and Sport Wales work with local authorities to identify opportunities to increase and improve access to leisure facilities across Wales.*

Response. Accept. As I have indicated I meet regularly with the Welsh Local Government Association to discuss a range of issues including how to improve access to leisure facilities. In addition, my officials have been in discussion with officials from the Education Department about the potential for community access to school facilities. I will keep the Committee updated on progress in this area.

Financial Implications: None.

Recommendation 11. *We recommend that the Minister undertake a review of the Free Swimming Scheme in order to identify areas where take-up is low and the reasons for this, and report back to us on his findings.*

Response. Accept. Within this year's remit letter to Sport Wales I have requested that key programmes such as Free Swimming are reviewed and refined in order that we maximise our return on our investment and consider how the programme can help to address key areas such as narrowing the participation gaps amongst those living in deprived areas, provide more opportunities for BME communities and those people with a disability. I will write to the Chair of the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee with key findings of the review.

Financial Implications: None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

Recommendation 12. *We further recommend that the Minister works with local authorities to address the variance in the provision of free swimming across Wales. The Minister should also publish an action plan setting out how he intends to increase the number of children under the age of 11 who can swim.*

Response. Accept in principle. Addressing this variance will form part of the review of Free Swimming, mentioned above. There is already a programme that aims to enable every child with the opportunity to learn to swim by the age of 11. This is being achieved through the co-ordinated provision of school swimming, local authority learn to swim programmes and Free Swimming. The current percentage of young people under the age of 11 who can swim 25 metres unaided in Wales is 54%, in contrast to England where the figure is 49%. In the light of this I will consider whether a specific action plan is required.

Financial Implications. None. Any additional costs will be met from existing programme budgets.

Best wishes,



John Griffiths AC / AM
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