

National Assembly for Wales

Children and Young People Committee

CO 02

Inquiry into Childhood Obesity

Evidence from : Welsh Sports Association

We are pleased that the dangers inherent in the obesity crisis affecting the nation are recognised. Both in terms of wellbeing and in terms of the potential financial cost to our health services the issue is one of the most important that we currently face as a nation.

Solutions will undoubtedly be complex and involve action on a range of lifestyle issues including obviously healthy eating. A vitally important strand of any solution must be taking all possible steps to encourage our young people, to take part in regular sport/physical recreation. We set out below some suggestions.

#### Community clubs

An effective way to make progress by permanent lifestyle change is by persuading young people to join sports clubs rather than looking to one-off initiatives or interventions. This would require maintaining and indeed increasing the capacity of national governing bodies and their clubs. This could be achieved by;

- Providing more funding for local grass roots coaching. Local coaches do not just coach – they recruit, they inspire and they motivate participants to continue
- Ensuring easy access to funding for training of coaches
- Looking again at innovative ways to incentivise volunteering

#### Statutory listing

We are also concerned at the potential cutting of local authority budgets for sport and leisure. We clearly live in austere times and there will no doubt be on-going threats to funding for grass-roots sport as there will be for all budgets. Since local authorities have no statutory obligation to provide sport & leisure services there is real danger that these services will be slashed simply because they are an easy target - without full consideration of the medium & long term ramifications for public health. We believe sport and leisure should be made a statutory duty simply so that proper consideration would need to be made before further cuts take place

#### Investing to save

In our view sport and physical recreation should be formally recognised as a public health issue by the specific allocation of a proportion of the health budget so as to support the more traditional sporting budgets via the HRH department. This is effectively “investing to save”. Funding directed to the increase of capacity grassroots sports/physical recreation clubs – particularly in disadvantaged communities - should be seen as investment providing excellent value for money in the medium and longer term.

## School Sport

We believe more must be done in regard to school sport- especially at primary school level. We set out below some specific suggestions in this regard

- Primary school banding to include measurement based on physical literacy of pupils and/or levels of participation across a range of sports
- Estyn inspections should have greater focus on a schools success in participation and forging school-club links.
- Provision of a central point of contact for school heads to open dialogue with NGBS/clubs who would be eager to discuss formal links. The WSA could assist with this
- More extensive mandatory training on physical activities/sports for trainee teachers including training on forging and maintaining school-club links
- Every school to be required to produce a Strategic Action Plan to show how they intend to increase sporting provision/school club links/ competitive opportunities. This could perhaps include clustering - linking a group of schools with a particular sport where the expertise and equipment is provided in one location – effectively operating as a centre of excellence
- New applicants for teaching posts to be required as a matter of course to detail their history of volunteering activities and to be able to show how they may be able to add value to the life of the school by sports volunteering if appointed
- Opening up facilities for evening/weekend use for sporting purposes
- Greater recognition of teachers who volunteer and the successes of schools in this area
- Looking at innovative qualifications/awards for physical literacy/sports participation including encouraging the concept of children themselves getting involved in coaching or other sports volunteering as they became older
- Looking at how clubs themselves can be supported so as to be more able to offer support to schools. Often clubs are small in scale and have difficulties in being able to provide coaches in the daytime
- Consideration of extending the school day from perhaps 8.30 to 5pm - formal lessons till 2.30 followed by sport/physical recreation until 5. We accept that this would be a huge change requiring a range of considerations but frankly the situation is such that bold action is warranted

## ***About the Welsh Sports Association (WSA)***

*There are nearly 7500 voluntary sports and recreation organisations in Wales. These form over 23% of all Welsh voluntary sector organisations - making the sport and recreation sector by far the biggest by organisation numbers in the third sector – (WCVA figures).*

*The Welsh Sports Association (WSA) is the recognised independent voice for sport, physical recreation and outdoor pursuits in Wales.*

*Since its foundation in 1972 the WSA has been the ‘umbrella’ organisation for National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport in Wales, providing them with representation and support. Currently over 60 NGBs are members of the WSA with an estimated 500,000 plus individual members participating in sport and recreation under their banners.*

*As well as being the voice for the sector the WSA offers a wide range of services to its members including guidance, training, information, governance support, financial management, development support and other services.*

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Welsh Sports Association

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