

# Physical Activity of Children and Young People

March 2019



The National Assembly for Wales is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales, agrees Welsh taxes and holds the Welsh Government to account.

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# Physical Activity of Children and Young People

March 2019



# About the Committee

The Committee was established on 28 June 2016. Its remit can be found at: [www.assembly.wales/SeneddHealth](http://www.assembly.wales/SeneddHealth)

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## Committee Chair:



**Dai Lloyd AM**  
Plaid Cymru  
South Wales West

## Current Committee membership:



**Dawn Bowden AM**  
Welsh Labour  
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney



**Jayne Bryant AM**  
Welsh Labour  
Newport West



**Angela Burns AM**  
Welsh Conservatives  
Carmarthen West and South  
Pembrokeshire



**Neil Hamilton AM**  
UKIP Wales  
Mid and West Wales



**Helen Mary Jones AM**  
Plaid Cymru  
Mid and West Wales



**Lynne Neagle AM**  
Welsh Labour  
Torfaen



**David Rees AM**  
Welsh Labour  
Aberavon

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The following Members were also members of the Committee during this inquiry.



**Rhun ap Iorwerth AM**  
Plaid Cymru  
Ynys Môn



**Caroline Jones AM**  
Independent  
South Wales West



**Julie Morgan AM**  
Welsh Labour  
Cardiff North

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## Chair's foreword

In Wales we are facing a national crisis in terms of our children's health. The latest figures from the [Public Health Wales Child Measurement Programme](#) show an increase in the number of obese four to five year olds over the last two years. More than one in four children aged four to five are overweight or obese in Wales, 27.1%, compared to 22.6% in England, in this age group.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) regards obesity as one of the most serious global public health challenges for the 21st century, and the UK has one of the highest levels of obesity in Western Europe.

We heard compelling evidence that Fundamental Motor Skills need to be taught at an early age, and there is a misconception that all the skills will develop naturally in childhood. We were concerned to hear views that there is currently a gap in the foundation phase in terms of teaching these skills, and believe this must be addressed, as active children are more likely to become active adults.

We agree with stakeholders that schools have a vital role to play in getting children and young people to be more physically active.

We were very concerned to hear evidence that physical activity is being squeezed out of school timetables due to curriculum pressures, and the majority of schools across Wales are not meeting the recommended 120 minutes a week for physical education.

It is clear to us that physical activity is not given enough priority in schools – this must change. The development of the forthcoming new curriculum offers a fantastic opportunity to redress the balance and give physical activity the attention and priority it deserves.

We agree with stakeholders that the recommended 120 minutes a week should be a statutory minimum requirement. We also agree that to elevate the status and priority given to physical activity in schools, it must be inspected by Estyn; both to monitor compliance that the 120 minutes is being adhered to, and also to assess the quality of physical education experience.

We are also in agreement that all schools should provide wider access to their school activity facilities to their local communities to encourage more physical activity outside of the school day.

The Welsh Government must make Community Focused Schools a reality for everyone, and ensure consistency of access to school facilities for physical activity opportunities beyond school hours across Wales.

But of course, it's not just about schools. Physical inactivity is a national problem that affects us all, and requires a cross-departmental commitment from the Welsh Government to tackle it.

If we don't start taking urgent action now to change attitudes towards physical activity, we are storing up problems for generations to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dai Lloyd", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Dr Dai Lloyd AM,  
Chair

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1.** The Welsh Government should work with Sport Wales, Public Health Wales and other partners to develop an agreed national measurement framework for physical activity levels and fitness as a matter of priority, to standardise and improve data collection.....Page 20

**Recommendation 2.** The Welsh Government should extend the Child Measurement Programme to monitor childhood obesity beyond age 4-5. We believe the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health’s recommendation of a measurement after birth, before school and in adolescence should be implemented as a minimum..... Page 21

**Recommendation 3.** We recommend that the Welsh Government’s recognition of the need to focus on family orientated approaches is taken forward in the final strategy to prevent and reduce obesity, and includes ambitious targets and effective monitoring to ensure tangible outcomes..... Page 31

**Recommendation 4.** The Welsh Government should require Sport Wales and Public Health Wales to work together to develop a programme which promotes the benefits of an active lifestyle, such as walking and cycling, for the whole family. .... Page 31

**Recommendation 5.** We recommend that the Welsh Government takes further action in the new curriculum to ensure that every child in Wales is enabled to develop the essential Fundamental Motor Skills required at an early age in school, and ensure that current gaps in the foundation phase related to these skills are fully addressed. We would support investment for programmes such as SKIP Cymru to be rolled out across the country to ensure that every school in Wales is able to adequately support children to learn these skills. .... Page 53

**Recommendation 6.** The Welsh Government should introduce a programme of investment in physical activity facilities for existing schools that are not part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools initiative..... Page 54

**Recommendation 7.** The Welsh Government should ensure all secondary schools regularly consult pupils on the choice and range of physical activities available to them and ensure their views are taken into account. .... Page 54

**Recommendation 8.** We recommend that the Welsh Government makes the recommended 120 minutes of physical education in schools a minimum statutory requirement..... Page 55

**Recommendation 9.** We recommend that the Welsh Government gives physical education a greater priority in the new curriculum and makes this priority clear to Estyn, and that physical activity should be given greater priority in Estyn’s inspection regime for schools. We believe that the inspection framework should include adherence to the 120 minute a week requirement, but also the quality of the physical education experience. ....Page 55

**Recommendation 10.** The Welsh Government should ensure that greater emphasis is placed on physical activity in the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme and as part of all teachers continuing professional development. ....Page 55

**Recommendation 11.** The Welsh Government must make Community Focused Schools a reality for everyone, and ensure consistency of access to school facilities for physical activity opportunities beyond school hours across Wales. The Welsh Government should report back to this Committee on progress within twelve months of the publication of this report. ....Page 55

**Recommendation 12.** The Welsh Government should share good practice, where schools are providing wider access to their facilities, including solutions for overcoming difficulties relating to governance, staffing and transport arrangements. ....Page 56

**Recommendation 13.** We recommend that the Welsh Government works with Estyn to ensure it includes, as part of its inspection regime, an assessment of the choice of activities available in schools, equality of access for girls and boys and whether pupils are being consulted on the activities being provided. ....Page 62

**Recommendation 14.** The Welsh Government should work with Sport Wales to raise the profile of women’s sport. This could include a programme of “female sporting role models” visiting schools to talk about their experiences and encourage more girls to participate in sporting activities. ....Page 62

**Recommendation 15.** The Welsh Government and Sport Wales should stipulate in funding applications for physical activity programmes that investment will only be made in programmes which emphasise a genuinely inclusive approach to the provision of physical activity, and include equality impact assessments which ensure that considerations for disabled children and young people are incorporated from the outset. ....Page 68

**Recommendation 16.** The Welsh Government should explore how the Pupil Development Grant could be utilised to help address the deprivation gap in physical activity levels. ....Page 68

**Recommendation 17.** The Welsh Government should review Sport Wales’ efforts to reduce the deprivation gap in physical activity levels given the lack of progress. ....Page 68

**Recommendation 18.** We recommend that the Welsh Government makes arrangements to put in place longer-term funding arrangements to enable Sport Wales and its partners to plan more strategically. ....Page 78

**Recommendation 19.** We recommend that the Welsh Government review the use of Section 106 agreements to see if they are being utilised by local authorities to ensure the provision of safe and accessible green spaces in new housing developments.....Page 78

**Recommendation 20.** We urge the Welsh Government to reconsider its position on the use of consequential funding from the soft drinks industry levy and commit to utilising it to increase physical activity and reduce the burden of obesity in Wales, as has been done in other parts of the UK. ....Page 78

## 1. Background

**1.** Physical inactivity is considered to be the fourth leading risk factor for mortality. The Welsh Government has previously estimated the cost of physical inactivity to Wales as being £650 million per year. We know that active children are more likely to become active adults and we also know the importance of physical activity in tackling obesity.

**2.** Southampton University noted in written evidence that “levels of physical activity and sedentariness among children in Wales are some of the poorest globally”.<sup>1</sup>

**3.** The latest figures from the Public Health Wales Child Measurement Programme<sup>2</sup> (published in 2018), show a rise in the number of obese four to five year olds over the last two years. It found that more than one in four children (aged four to five) are overweight or obese in Wales: 27.1%, compared to 22.6% in England in this age group.

**4.** Public Health Wales and Sport Wales stated in their joint report “Getting Wales Moving” (2017):

“Today, being inactive is perceived as normal by a large proportion of people. This passive attitude towards levels of activity, where movement and exercise is viewed as simply a personal choice is not sustainable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Wales and is an issue that urgently needs to be addressed [...]”.<sup>3</sup>

**5.** We also heard concerns that the positive impact of physical activity on mental wellbeing for children and young people needs to be given greater recognition.

**6.** Within this context, we agreed to undertake an inquiry into physical activity of children and young people, focusing particularly on:

- what we know about physical activity levels in children in Wales and the robustness of the data on this issue;

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<sup>1</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 23

<sup>2</sup> [Child Measurement Programme for Wales](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Getting Wales Moving](#) – March 2017

- differences in gender-based attitudes towards, and opportunities for, participation in physical activity in Wales;
- 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;
- 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;
- physical activity guidelines and how we benchmark physical fitness in children;
- measurement, evaluation and effectiveness of the Welsh Government's programmes and schemes aimed at promoting physical activity of children;
- value for money of Welsh Government spending to promote exercise in children;
- 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.

**7.** From 20 July to 15 September 2017, we ran a public consultation. We received 51 written responses, representing the views of a range of healthcare organisations, professional groups and individuals. In addition, we heard oral evidence from a number of witnesses. We visited Bassaleg School to hear the views of pupils and teachers; held focus group discussions with stakeholders; and conducted a webchat with young people between the ages of 11 and 21 about their levels of activity and the barriers they face or have faced in becoming active. We heard evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism at our meeting on 13 June 2018.

**8.** We note that the Welsh Government has published a consultation on its draft obesity strategy *Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales*<sup>4</sup> in January 2019, and

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<sup>4</sup> <https://beta.gov.wales/healthy-weight-healthy-wales>

expect the messages in this report to be taken into account in the development of the final strategy.

**9.** We have also researched successful approaches being adopted in other European countries to tackle this issue, and referenced examples of good practice in this report.

**10.** We would like to thank everyone who has given up their time to contribute to our work.

## 2. What do we know about physical activity levels in children in Wales?

**11.** Guidelines issued by the four Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland state:

- All children and young people (aged 5-18) should engage in moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity for at least 60 minutes and up to several hours every day.
- Vigorous intensity activities, including those that strengthen muscle and bone, should be incorporated at least three days a week.
- All children and young people should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods.<sup>5</sup>

**12.** Evidence from the Welsh Government states that overall, 51% of children aged 3-17 meet the guidelines, however, only 14-17% of children aged 11-16 partake in the recommended amount of physical activity.<sup>6</sup>

**13.** Sport Wales' School Sport Survey reports that 48% of young people are taking part in sport or physical activity three or more times a week. This figure has remained static from 2015-2018.

**14.** According to the Active Healthy Kids – Wales 2018 Report:

“A significant effort needs to be made to address the very high levels of sedentary behaviour among young people in Wales.”<sup>7</sup>

### Data collection and measurement of fitness and activity levels

**15.** There are currently a number of sources that provide information on the physical activity levels of children and young people in Wales. These include:

- Welsh Health Survey and National Survey for Wales;
- Health Behaviour of School Children Study;

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<sup>5</sup> [Start Active. Stay Active](#) - July 2011

<sup>6</sup> HSCS Committee, 13 June 2018, Paper 1

<sup>7</sup> [Active Healthy Kids – Wales 2018 Report](#)

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- School Sport Survey;
- Child Measurement Programme (CMP) for Wales;
- School Health Research Network;
- Active Healthy Kids Wales Report Card.

**16.** Evidence from the University of Southampton highlights the need to improve data collection, stating it is important to benchmark the current health-related physical fitness levels of children in order to assess the effectiveness of any interventions:

“There is a clear need for more long-term interventions and repeated follow-up assessments with robust data collection, using relevant and appropriate measures to track compliance and change in lifestyle. Nationally implemented measurement programmes may offer a useful means to obtain measurements of body composition (e.g., the CMP for Wales), physical fitness, and physical activity that could be used to monitor progression, and inform the design, delivery and evaluation of targeted interventions.”<sup>8</sup>

**17.** It also notes that it is important to recognise that focusing solely on physical activity or diet in isolation will not be sufficient, and the message provided to people should include achieving optimum health and fitness as key components. It says there is a great opportunity for the Welsh Government to demonstrate leadership by committing to preventing childhood obesity – “a holistic opportunity that was missed in the UK action plan”.

**18.** A number of stakeholders pointed to the lack of information about physical activity levels during children’s formative early years (0 to 4 years). Evidence from Public Health Wales states:

“No valid population level indicator of physical activity for children age 0 to 4 years in Wales (or the UK) currently exists. Work to develop an appropriate measure should be prioritised.”<sup>9</sup>

**19.** We took evidence from several stakeholders, including focus group participants, who felt that the Child Measurement Programme (CMP) should be extended, it is currently a one-off height and weight measurement taken of 4 – 5

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<sup>8</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 23

<sup>9</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 40

year olds in Wales. The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) believes that the Welsh Government should consider funding as a minimum, a second measurement (e.g. in Year 3 of school) of height and weight to add to the data collected via the CMP. The RCN note that as the CMP is currently a one-off measurement, the data collected gives no indication of trends throughout primary school aged years or of the effectiveness of any measures taken to tackle obesity in children.<sup>10</sup> The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health also called for the expansion of the CMP to measure children after birth, before school and in adolescence.<sup>11</sup> BMA Cymru noted however that the robustness of the CMP may be impacted upon by the fact that a proportion of the children eligible to take part in this programme are opted out by their parents.<sup>12</sup>

**20.** It was suggested that the robustness of the data that is available in Wales is compromised by a reliance on self-report surveys (either direct from children or from parents / guardians) and that there is no directly measured data on levels of physical activity or fitness. Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board’s written evidence stated:

“There is a risk of bias with survey data which is self completed and therefore the estimated results may not be an accurate reflection of levels of physical activity within the wider population.”<sup>13</sup>

**21.** Welsh Netball commented that the School Sport Survey data is “fairly subjective” as it is self-reported by children from ages 7 upwards<sup>14</sup> and Caerphilly County Borough Council (CBC) noted that the survey data gives headline figures but no useful information for its development team to actually make an impact on the figures<sup>15</sup>.

**22.** The Children’s Commissioner for Wales raised concerns about the number of surveys being used to collect data from children and suggested better co-ordination was needed.<sup>16</sup> The Welsh Rugby Union (WRU) made a similar point, saying:

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<sup>10</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 32

<sup>11</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 48

<sup>12</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 33

<sup>13</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 14

<sup>14</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 16

<sup>15</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 24

<sup>16</sup> RoP, 19 April 2018, paragraph 326

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“Historically, there have been several different surveys undertaken in Wales to collect information on physical activity. This can be confusing for the sector, but also makes it difficult for benchmarking, viewing trends and comparing data.”<sup>17</sup>

**23.** Sport Wales acknowledged that there are currently many different ways of collecting data and measuring levels of participation. Its written evidence states:

“The inconsistency isn’t in the public interest. Some work has commenced looking at this, but a better co-ordinated and more systematic approach would be welcomed.”<sup>18</sup>

**24.** A number of responses stated that there is no universal measure and benchmarking of physical fitness levels in Wales.

**25.** Evidence from Public Health Wales states:

“There is no universal measure and benchmarking of physical fitness levels in Wales although relevant projects have run in some regions, for example the Swan-linx project in Swansea area which combined assessment of physical fitness and competence, with questions on motivation and attitudes towards participation.

It is recommended any universal fitness measure be introduced with caution, and be a relative measure with the focus on change/ progression in a child’s individual fitness. The new curriculum development provides an opportunity to introduce objective measures of physical fitness at an individual child level to enable child centred goals and objectives to be set and monitored as a component of their educational achievement and learning.”<sup>19</sup>

**26.** Disability Sport Wales told us that it is essential that any work done is inclusive of disabled children and young people to assess their levels of physical fitness, and to develop guidelines for physical activity, to ensure that there is not a fitness or measurement tool gap:

“Currently, within the vast majority knowledge and insight linked to guidelines and benchmarks, there is an assumption that the model identified for non-disabled individuals will also translate to disabled

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<sup>17</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 14

<sup>18</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 45

<sup>19</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 40

individuals. This assumption potentially means that essential considerations which would drive best practice and high-quality engagement and provision are missed, and diverse communities (in this case disabled people) are still over-looked and not effectively provided for without additional support from agencies such as DSW.”<sup>20</sup>

**27.** It also says physical activity programmes which are delivered through partner and funding agencies do not capture sufficient information regarding disabled children, young people and adults, and therefore, measurements and evaluations are not readily available.

**28.** When asked if he would support the development of an agreed measurement framework so that a benchmark could be set and progress consistently monitored, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services said:

“... when we talk about a common outcomes framework, that really matters, not just for the Government but actually to have those bodies like Public Health Wales and Sport Wales working to the same sort of framework, and that then matters about how we then measure our progress. So, in the child measurement programme, we have a range of measures there. We need to think about how we do this in a way that is consistent, because I do recognise the criticism and the validity in it that, actually, there are times when different people who are all in roughly the same space are saying slightly different things, and the message is then confusing and you can’t then effectively understand what we’ve done.”<sup>21</sup>

**29.** The Welsh Government’s Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales consultation states:

“Ongoing evaluation and a focus on continuous improvement, which will enable us to learn from our work, adapt and change. This will include a review of the data from the Child Measurement Programme, including to develop a second measurement to consider how we can measure change effectively.”<sup>22</sup>

**30.** In Slovenia, “SLOfit”, a national surveillance system for physical and motor development of children and youth is used to monitor fitness and track progress in all Slovenian primary and secondary schools. Every April, almost the entire Slovenian population of children and young people aged 6 to 19 (220,000

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<sup>20</sup> Written evidence, PAYCP 47

<sup>21</sup> RoP, 13 June 2018, paragraph 158

<sup>22</sup> Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales – January 2019

students) is measured using motor tests and anthropometric measurements. The SLOfit measurement procedure is the same every year, which allows a direct comparison of individual outcomes of physical and motoric development over the years. It has been reported that effectiveness of government policies in Slovenia in this area is due to evidence-based policy planning based on the SLOfit data, providing secular trends in physical and motor development of children and youth to plan its future activities and interventions (such as the intervention programme “Healthy Lifestyle”), as well as evaluating their effectiveness.<sup>23</sup>

### Slovenia

Slovenia scored the highest grade (A-) for Overall Physical Activity in the [2016 Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance report cards](#) (also available as an [infographic](#)).

The report card states that according to data, 97% of boys and 95% girls (ages: 6-11 y) are meeting WHO recommendations for daily PA. Combined data of younger (6-11 y) and older age groups (12-18 y) shows that 86% boys and 76% girls (aged 6-18) meet the WHO PA guidelines.

### Schools

Slovenian primary schools offer access to nearly 80 minutes of in-school, professionally-supported physical activity each day, combining compulsory PE classes and other compulsory physical activities (‘schools in nature’, sport days, etc.) and voluntary extracurricular physical activities organised in schools.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports runs a national scheme “Healthy Lifestyle” for after-school activity, providing a further 5 hours of physical activity per week on top of the mandatory PE lessons during school hours. All primary schools are obliged to offer extracurricular sport programs, which are free of charge for all children.

In the best case scenario, a 10-year old in Slovenia can receive 131 hours of regular PE lessons a year, plus 25 hours in school sport days, 35 hours of elective sport courses, and at least 35 hours of extracurricular school-based sport practice, summing to an annual total of 226 hours of school-based PE. In the (worst-case) event that a 10-year-old would participate in only the compulsory 3 weekly lessons of PE and obligatory school days, this number would drop to ~39 min per school day, still more than half the 60 min of recommended daily PA.

“SLOfit”, a national surveillance system for physical and motor development of children and youth is used to monitor fitness and track progress. The system was implemented in 1982 on a sample of Slovenian schools and after 5 years of testing it was introduced to all Slovenian primary and secondary schools.

The Slovenian Parliament has adopted a National Programme of Sport for 2014-2023 which proposes the following actions: to provide at least 180 min of high quality PE per week to every child, to provide free swimming and cycling lessons as a means of enhancing social competencies, and to ensuring leisure time for sporting activities. Some of the programmes aims include:

- ensure at least one hour of quality guided sports exercises every day for every child and young person;

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<sup>23</sup> Active Healthy Kids Report Card

- update and increase the quality and attractiveness of existing leisure programs for children's and young people's sports education;
- provide at least two hours of extra free, quality guided leisure activities per week for pupils and high school students;
- encourage the integration of schools and sport, charity and other associations at a local level for the implementation of programmes for children and young people with disabilities;
- develop a national campaign to promote sports behaviour;
- have a national campaign to promote regular sport, more exercise, and healthy living.

## Finland

Finland is often highlighted for its innovative approach to physical activity.

The "Schools on the Move" programme is a "priority project" in the Finnish Government Programme. It is a national action programme funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture and lottery funding, which aims to increase daily exercise and establish a physically active culture.

The programme started in 2010 with 45 pilot schools all over the country. Today, the majority of primary and comprehensive schools in Finland are "Schools on the Move".

The government's goal is that the Schools on the Move programme will be expanded across the country to ensure one hour of physical activity each day. (Government Programme, May 2015)

Finnish "Schools on the Move" programme includes:

- Active lessons and reduced sitting time
- Physical activity breaks (indoors or out)
- Annual health examinations in schools
- Parent education on healthy eating
- School playgrounds and outdoor facilities open to the local community in the evening

Examples of actions undertaken to create a more physically active school day include:

- Organised physical activities (PAs) in the school setting
  - Longer recess period to enable PA
  - Organised recess activities
  - Clubs and activities after school
  - Physically active breaks during academic lessons
  - Whole school events related to sports and PA
- Involvement of the students
  - Students participate in the school PA working group
  - Students act as peer instructors and recess PA activators (organising activities)

## Our view

- 31.** It is clear that there are a number of different data sources on physical activity, measuring different things, which, as noted by stakeholders, is not helpful for tracking progress. There are also limitations with the available data sources, such as a heavy reliance on self-reported surveys, a lack of local level data, and gaps in data, including for children aged 0-4 years, and the lack of any ongoing measurement of childhood obesity.
- 32.** We agree with stakeholders that an agreed national measurement framework must be developed (which includes objective measurements not just self-reporting surveys) to measure levels of physical fitness and activity at both an individual and national level in Wales.
- 33.** We are very concerned about the lack of data collection on physical activity levels and obesity in childhood, and want to see urgent action taken to address the gaps in data.
- 34.** We agree with stakeholders that the Child Measurement Programme should be extended - a one-off measurement at age 4-5 only is not sufficient, there should be a series of measurements at intervals throughout childhood and adolescence. It is alarming that the latest data shows a quarter of 4-5 year olds are overweight or obese, and this must be tracked and monitored more closely. We urge the Welsh Government to go further than the proposal in its Healthy Weight consultation to consider developing a second measurement.
- 35.** We agree with Disability Sport Wales that it is essential that data collection is inclusive of disabled children and young people to assess their levels of physical fitness and activity. We endorse the view that Sport Wales and the Welsh Government must ensure that publicly funded physical activity programmes are required to capture sufficient information regarding disabled children, young people and adults.

**Recommendation 1.** The Welsh Government should work with Sport Wales, Public Health Wales and other partners to develop an agreed national measurement framework for physical activity levels and fitness as a matter of priority, to standardise and improve data collection.

**Recommendation 2.** The Welsh Government should extend the Child Measurement Programme to monitor childhood obesity beyond age 4-5. We believe the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health's recommendation of a measurement after birth, before school and in adolescence should be implemented as a minimum.

### 3. Effectiveness of Welsh Government policies

**36.** The Welsh Government supports a number of programmes and initiatives in Wales which aim to get more children and young people more active, including the Daily Mile, Dragon Sport, and the 5x60 programme.

**37.** We heard differing views in relation to the effectiveness of specific Welsh Government programmes and policies.

**38.** The **Daily Mile**, which sees primary school children run, walk or jog for 15 minutes every day, was seen as “a positive example of increasing physical activity levels in a fun and achievable way within the school setting”.<sup>24</sup>

**39.** Caerphilly County Borough Council suggested this was because there is “no cost, all abilities can be engaged and there have been no heavy targets or stipulations made on the delivery methods”.<sup>25</sup>

**40.** We heard concerns about the long term sustainability of the **5x60 programme**,<sup>26</sup> and the ability of schools to sustain the programme with a “continuous reduction in funding”.<sup>27</sup>

**41.** Sustainability of funding was raised as a concern by a number of stakeholders, such as the City and County of Swansea who highlighted that the short term nature of funding is having an impact on the effectiveness of programmes. The Council stated that, although programmes may run for a number of years, the funding is only confirmed annually which reduces the opportunity for effective long-term planning.<sup>28</sup>

**42.** The **Welsh Network for Healthy Schools** was established to support a whole school approach and ethos towards health and wellbeing including physical activity. The Welsh Government provided funding for local schemes of £2.3m per annum through Public Health Wales’ core budget. Dedicated healthy school practitioners work directly with schools to help them implement improvements to school practice in order to comply with the national framework. Over 99% of all schools in Wales are now involved in the programme.

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<sup>24</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 35

<sup>25</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 24

<sup>26</sup> **50x60 – Sport Wales**

<sup>27</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 24

<sup>28</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 31

**43.** Public Health Wales told us that while Wales is recognised internationally as having one of the most successful schemes in terms of the level of participation, one of the big challenges is making sure that the things schools are being encouraged to do are the things that are going to make the biggest difference and that data is being collected that can show that progress is being made. Dr Julie Bishop told us:

“I think that, if I am honest, I think what’s happened is that we have turned it into a process and we’ve lost sight of the outcome— So, we’ve asked schools to do things on physical activity, but we haven’t actually asked them to measure whether or not that makes a difference.”<sup>29</sup>

**44.** In September 2014, the **Physical Literacy Programme for Schools (PLPS)** commenced, and between 2014 and 2016, £3.7m has been provided to Sport Wales to manage the programme. The Welsh Government reports that an evaluation of PLPS shows that the number of young people participating in physical activity every day by week 12 has increased by 204%, resulting in over 5,000 additional young people engaging in physical activity every day.

**45.** Welsh Government states that the key legacy from the PLPS programme was the interactive Physical Literacy Journey (PLJ) (formerly known as the Physical Literacy Framework) which has been published on Sport Wales website.

**46.** Written evidence from Sport Wales states:

“The Physical Literacy Journey was developed to support future curriculum planning and delivery, and has been aligned to Successful Futures in terms of a progressive continuum (journey) with steps along the way to track progress. It has been populated with examples of the ‘how’ and the ‘what’ in terms of physical literacy in action, and supports the Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience, but also holistically across the curriculum. This, together, with a range of academics working in this field, Wales is leading the way in the UK in this field.”<sup>30</sup>

**47.** However, in oral evidence, Sarah Powell, Chief Executive of Sport Wales, told us:

“It is there as a resource for all schools. We’re not aware that all schools are using it. We have promoted it and we have put it out there, but we

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<sup>29</sup> RoP, 15 March 2018, paragraphs 133-135

<sup>30</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 13

would really like to see physical literacy and the learning that we've had over the 14 years incorporated into the new curriculum."<sup>31</sup>

**48.** When asked about the long term impact of the physical literacy investment, and whether it has a lasting legacy beyond the website, the Cabinet Secretary for Education stated:

“Well, it's not the only legacy, is it, because what's happening with the physical literacy programme is that that evidence and those resources are integral to the curriculum group that is looking to develop the content for the health and well-being area of learning and experience. So, there is an ongoing input for those resources that is shaping policy for the new curriculum. So, it's not just that a programme comes to an end and then there's nothing; those resources continue to inform policy decisions to shape the new curriculum. That's an ongoing piece of work.”<sup>32</sup>

**49.** The Cabinet Secretary for Education told us there had been “a sustained investment by previous administrations from 2001 to 2016, which saw nearly £30 million invested in school sport”.<sup>33</sup>

**50.** Yet despite this investment, the Active Healthy Kids Wales Report Card 2016<sup>34</sup> stated that “policy has not resulted in an increase in physical activity in Wales for the past 10 years”. Public Health Wales agreed with this conclusion, saying:

“Based on the evidence from available data regarding physical activity participation rates, Public Health Wales considers the Report Card's appraisal a fair assessment of policy impact.”<sup>35</sup>

**51.** When questioned on this evidence, Dr Julie Bishop of Public Health Wales told us:

“I don't think we're critical of the policy as such, because I think, actually, the policy is generally good. The policy follows all of the international evidence. So, our feeling, I think, is it's about the way we implement policy that maybe needs a little extra work. So, our ambition is to do the right thing, but maybe when we start to put it into practice,

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<sup>31</sup> RoP, 19 April 2018, paragraph 156

<sup>32</sup> RoP, 13 June 2018, paragraph 33

<sup>33</sup> RoP, 13 June 2018, paragraph 13

<sup>34</sup> [Active Healthy Kids Wales Report Card 2016](#) – Is Wales Turning the Tide on Children's Inactivity?

<sup>35</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 40

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we're not actually either having the impact at the scale that's required [ ] in the sense that we sometimes actually don't do the evaluation very well, and that means that we can't always work out what's making a difference and what isn't."<sup>36</sup>

**52.** Public Health Wales stated that a lack of focus on measurement of impact or outcomes is a weakness for the majority of health improvement action in Wales, including for physical activity, and advised that work is being undertaken with a cross-organisational group to develop a minimum set of indicators for population physical activity in Wales.

**53.** When we put these points to the Welsh Government, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services said:

“And we recognise that. So, when we said that, actually, in the opening response to Caroline Jones, if we hadn't done this the situation would be worse, that isn't saying that that means everything's fine—far from it. It's a recognition from us that we actually want to achieve more. That's why we're looking again at the range of things we're doing, including the healthy schools network, where, actually, it's not just about going through a process to get a certificate or a badge but actually saying, 'What is changing in terms of the activity of those children and families?' Again, it's a consistent theme, isn't it, about how we need to get alongside whole families, not just children, so that the work that schools do isn't just confined to the classroom and the playground, and that's really important. That's why there's lots of work going across my portfolio and the Cabinet Secretary for Education's. There is no complacency within the Government, and our challenge is how we persuade people who live in the country to act differently.”<sup>37</sup>

**54.** A number of respondents<sup>38</sup> stated that they were unable to comment on the effectiveness of Welsh Government programmes due to the lack of evaluation data and limited evidence available. The Welsh Rugby Union stated:

“There is currently no system in place to measure the impact/effectiveness of Welsh Government Programmes/activities in this area. It is therefore impossible to assess the value for money of Welsh Government spending to promote exercise in children. The WRU

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<sup>36</sup> RoP, 15 March 2018, paragraph 112

<sup>37</sup> RoP, 13 June 2018, paragraph 29

<sup>38</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 13, PACYP 18, PACYP 44, PACYP 47

believe that it is essential that a system is developed to measure value for money.”<sup>39</sup>

**55.** While Natural Resources Wales said that:

“Consideration should be given to assessing the cumulative ‘value for money’ for the public purse of interventions that deliver multiple benefits, including increasing children’s physical activity levels. For example, a new green outdoor play space in an urban area could deliver a range of tangible benefits, including increasing children’s physical activity levels, improving air quality, and reducing flooding through mitigating surface water drainage. Cumulative valuation of these benefits will provide a much more accurate assessment of total ‘value for money’ than more silo based intervention assessments.”<sup>40</sup>

**56.** In July 2018, the Welsh Government launched a new Healthy and Active Fund, stating:

“We are launching today, in partnership with Sport Wales and Public Health Wales, a new £5m Healthy and Active Fund which will strengthen community assets and enable people to adopt healthier lifestyles. [...] The first phase of the fund will therefore focus on enabling active lifestyles.”<sup>41</sup>

## Role of public bodies

**57.** A number of respondents held the view that NHS Wales, Public Health Wales and Sport Wales have a recognisable role to play in improving levels of physical activity.

**58.** Evidence from Sport Wales states:

“We want children from all backgrounds to have the best start in life, that everyone will have the opportunity to reach their full potential and lead a healthy, prosperous and fulfilling life. This is everyone’s role. It is a cross governmental agenda and not limited to Sport Wales, NHS Wales

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<sup>39</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 45

<sup>40</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 29

<sup>41</sup> Written statement – Launch of the Health and Active Fund

and Public Health Wales. It would benefit from a better coordinated and integrated approach.”<sup>42</sup>

**59.** Welsh Netball suggested that “generally collaboration between the organisations is poor” and that the “understanding of each other’s roles and responsibilities means that work goes on in silos”.<sup>43</sup>

**60.** According to Disability Sport Wales, “there needs to be clear direction from the Welsh Government regarding the specific areas of the physical activity continuum that Sport Wales (and the National Governing Bodies for sport in Wales), NHS Wales, and Public Health Wales will lead on and be responsible for.

**61.** While Powys County Council suggested:

“There is room for significant improvement for all agencies and national bodies to encourage, promote and improve levels of physical activity. It is important that all agencies work together on a shared agenda and budgets are used as effectively as possible. The preventative agenda should be given consideration and appropriate funding to reduce the numbers of children being treated for conditions that could have been dealt with earlier.”<sup>44</sup>

**62.** Cardiff and Vale University Health Board said there was much evidence on best practice in promoting physical activity and Public Health Wales has a leadership role to disseminate the evidence and work with others to implement and monitor interventions.<sup>45</sup>

**63.** Public Health Wales told us it believed it was well placed to work with others to facilitate action towards this goal and to support Government in monitoring population levels of physical activity, including inequalities:

“It is important that there is ongoing and active leadership and co-ordination of this important area of work and Public Health Wales is committed to continuing its work with Government and with other bodies such as Sport Wales, Natural Resources Wales and the

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<sup>42</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 13

<sup>43</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 16

<sup>44</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 49

<sup>45</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 18

Curriculum Reform Programme to maximise the opportunities to improve health outcomes.”<sup>46</sup>

## Role of Parents

**64.** A number of witnesses highlighted the importance of the role played by parents in the levels of physical activity carried out by children and young people and referred to studies and evidence that show children are more likely to participate in physical activity if their peers and family members are physically active themselves.

**65.** Professor Mark Hanson from the University of Southampton told us that many aspects of early life are programmed and set up in early life, such as: appetite, food preference, metabolism, cardiovascular control and possibly even the propensity to exercise. He went on to say:

“These factors are passed from one generation to the next not just by genetic factors or indeed even by environmental factors, but by aspects of the mother and, we now know, the father’s body composition, their diet and their lifestyle. We know, of course, that if parents smoke, that produces risky development of the child, but we’re now beginning to see that whether the parents are obese, whether they have a balanced diet and other aspects of their lifestyle can pass on risk from one generation to the next.

So, whilst our work here over the last 10 years has very much focused on improving adolescent behaviour to try to make them healthier parents in the future, we’re now beginning to realise that actually we need to start even earlier than that. In fact, in primary school children or even in pre-school children, there’s a need to take some interventions.”<sup>47</sup>

**66.** Julie Bishop, Public Health Wales, agreed that home and family environment were key to increasing physical activity in children and young people:

“children don’t spend all of their time in school, and we recognise that whether it’s physical activity or whether it’s food choices, the home and family environment are very big players. So, we have to see ways in which we can also work with parents as key players in that sense. But we also need to remember that parents all want the best for their

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<sup>46</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 40

<sup>47</sup> RoP, 19 April 2018, paragraph 7

children. So, no parent is actively making decisions with the intention of not doing something positive.”<sup>48</sup>

**67.** She went on to say that one of the biggest challenges facing society as a whole is the fact that being active is no longer the norm.

**68.** Evidence from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board expressed a similar view, stating:

“It is also important to strengthen the role of families and parents in ensuring children and young people are physically active and have physical activity built into their daily lives, to develop the ‘habit’ of being physically active. However, over the past decades we have often ‘designed’ physical activity out of family life as an unintended consequence of interventions designed to increase safety or efficiency. For example, it is quicker for time pressured parents to drive children to school, and then on to their work.”<sup>49</sup>

**69.** The Children’s Commissioner for Wales said there was a need to encourage a more active, whole-family environment:

“There’s no point in parents just driving their children to an activity, picking them up, and driving them home again. It’s how we can build it into whole active families. We’ve seen things like family fun runs and park runs et cetera—we can really see the power of families enjoying being physical together.”<sup>50</sup>

**70.** Evidence from the City and County of Swansea agreed that a greater emphasis on engaging and educating families as a whole is needed. It suggests that this could be achieved by establishing more family focussed activity sessions in various locations, so that physical activity becomes the “norm” and those simple, but key messages become a part of daily life.

**71.** It also suggests that a return to a more focused approach to encouraging parents to volunteer, which have been successful in the past, could be beneficial and could help to develop a culture change in attitudes towards physical activity.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> RoP, 15 March 2018, paragraph 149

<sup>49</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 26

<sup>50</sup> RoP, 19 April 2018, paragraph 319

<sup>51</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 31

**72.** Research from the Centre for Exercise, Nutrition and Health Sciences at the University of Bristol suggests that mothers and fathers can provide important sources of support for their children:

“We have found that logistic support (e.g. providing transport to and from physical activity provisions, helping with enrolment in new activities, watching and showing interest), parents’ own activity behaviours and being active with their child inspires children’s confidence to be active.”<sup>52</sup>

**73.** The Mental Health Foundation told us that “working mothers and fathers represent high risk groups for declining physical activity, potentially resulting from family or work responsibilities, lack of support and time or feelings of guilt. Children within these families may therefore lack the role model of their parents engaging in physical activity”.<sup>53</sup>

**74.** The Welsh Government’s Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales consultation states:

“Family and parents have considerable influence on children’s healthy weight behaviours, particularly in the earlier years of a child life. In shaping the home environment, routines around bedtimes, mealtimes, play, physical activity and food choices, can support or hinder efforts to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. It is therefore important to focus on family-orientated approaches.”

## Our view

**75.** We are facing a national crisis in terms of our children’s health. We’ve heard evidence about various Welsh Government policies and initiatives, but there are clear concerns amongst stakeholders about their sustainability and impact.

**76.** The lack of evidence of the impact of Welsh Government policies and programmes is a real concern. It is clear by the Welsh Government and Public Health Wales’ own admission, that there hasn’t been sufficient focus on measuring outcomes effectively thus far. It is concerning that after the significant investment in the Physical Literacy for Schools Programme, the long term impact is still not clear.

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<sup>52</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 15

<sup>53</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 28

**77.** Indeed Public Health Wales told us that the conclusion by the Active Healthy Kids Wales Report Card 2016<sup>54</sup> that “policy has not resulted in an increase in physical activity in Wales for the past 10 years” was “a fair assessment of policy impact” – this must change.

**78.** It is vital that all future programmes have effective mechanisms built in for monitoring and evaluation and can demonstrate clear outcomes.

**79.** We have heard that public bodies need to work together more effectively, and also acknowledge the important role of parents in influencing their children’s physical activity. We welcome the Healthy and Active Fund, launched by Welsh Government in partnership with Sport Wales and Public Health Wales. We stress again that it is imperative that clear outcome targets and effective monitoring is built in from the outset.

**80.** Physical inactivity is a national problem for people of all ages. We need effective public health interventions to help to address the issues. We welcome the Welsh Government’s recognition in the Healthy Weight consultation of the need to focus on family orientated approaches, and urge them to take this forward in the final strategy with ambitious targets and effective monitoring to ensure tangible outcomes.

**Recommendation 3.** We recommend that the Welsh Government’s recognition of the need to focus on family orientated approaches is taken forward in the final strategy to prevent and reduce obesity, and includes ambitious targets and effective monitoring to ensure tangible outcomes.

**Recommendation 4.** The Welsh Government should require Sport Wales and Public Health Wales to work together to develop a programme which promotes the benefits of an active lifestyle, such as walking and cycling, for the whole family.

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<sup>54</sup> [Active Healthy Kids Wales Report Card 2016 – Is Wales Turning the Tide on Children’s Inactivity?](#)

## 4. The role of schools

**81.** One of the main messages we have heard during this inquiry is the vital role of the school in getting children and young people more active.

**82.** The World Health Organisation report, *Health and Development Through Physical Activity and Sport*, states:

“Schools have unique opportunities to provide adequate physical activity for all young people on an equal basis through official compulsory physical education programmes as well as through school sport programmes and after school leisure-time physical activity initiatives.”<sup>55</sup>

**83.** The Welsh Sports Association told us:

“The school setting is the one place where every child can acquire the basic physical skills needed to become healthy and resilient individuals. A fundamental shift in attitudes is needed so that the health and wellbeing of every pupil is recognised as much as their academic success.”<sup>56</sup>

**84.** And according to Sport Wales, “schools are key to the future of physical activity for young people because it removes inequalities”.<sup>57</sup>

### Early years

**85.** We received evidence which highlighted the need to target children early, and specifically “before the age of seven”, which appears to be a crucial window.

**86.** The Wales Institute for Physical Literacy (WIPL) and University of Southampton both highlighted the need to target children in their early years, before the age of seven, to influence their physical activity levels throughout their lives.

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<sup>55</sup> *Health and Development Through Physical Activity and Sport*, 2003

<sup>56</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 44

<sup>57</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 13

**87.** Evidence from the University of Southampton states that according to research, the decline in physical activity levels begins as early as age seven, and therefore efforts to promote physical activity should begin before adolescence.<sup>58</sup>

**88.** WIPL highlights the importance of movement in early childhood, and says that motor competence is a key factor influencing children’s physical activity levels. It states that there is a common misconception that proficiency in Fundamental Motor Skills (FMS) naturally develops in childhood, but this is not the case, and like many other academic skills, FMS need developmentally appropriate instruction and opportunities to practice skills in enriched learning environments. WIPL says children who are delayed in FMS are less likely to be physically active both now and in the future.<sup>59</sup>

**89.** WIPL endorses *Successful Kinaesthetic Instruction for Pre-schoolers (SKIP)*, an evidence based programme of professional development, which has been used to train teachers, teaching assistants and parents about the importance of early movement for child development. It was funded through the Welsh Government’s PLPS project which has now come to an end.

**90.** Dr Nalda Wainwright, Director of WIPL, told the Committee:

“[...] we train the teachers to understand how children move through those stages. They do it in literacy and numeracy, but nobody’s taught them that in a physical context. There’s been such a misconception in the world of academia around motor development—suggesting children learn that by themselves through play. But that’s like chucking a bag of letters in the room and saying, ‘Play with it enough and you’ll learn to read’, and teachers go, ‘That’s ridiculous’. It’s the same thing. So, we really need to plug this knowledge gap with our teachers and that’s what we’ve been doing, and rolling it out.”<sup>60</sup>

**91.** WIPL believes that there is a gap in the Foundation Phase teaching, and it is not currently sufficient for children to develop the required Fundamental Motor Skills. It further states that evidence based “SKIP Cymru” training should be funded by the Welsh Government and rolled out to every single foundation phase and preschool setting in Wales, noting it is cost effective because teachers are trained in-house.

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<sup>58</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 23

<sup>59</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 04

<sup>60</sup> RoP, 19 April 2018, paragraph 19

**92.** Dr Nalda Wainwright told the Committee:

“The problem we have is that that window is taught mostly by non-specialists and you actually need to teach the children these skills. They don’t learn it just through playing alone. We’ve done research in the foundation phase, looking at that play-based curriculum, which should be ideal for children to learn to move really well. And what we’ve seen is that their locomotor travelling skills do develop, because they do a lot of playing outside when the foundation phase is done well. But their object control, their striking, their hitting, their manipulative skills don’t improve. And that’s because these are very specific cultural skills and unfortunately they’re also the biggest predictor of adolescent physical activity. So, we really need to nail that before they get to that age of seven or eight where the penny drops [...].”<sup>61</sup>

**93.** Dr Wainwright, confirmed that the programme had been costed and could be delivered for less than £35<sup>62</sup> per child for every foundation phase child in Wales for three years. These figures have been shared with the Cabinet Secretary for Education.

**94.** The Cabinet Secretary for Education spoke about activity in the foundation phase:

“From an education point of view, of course, physical development is a core element of the foundation phase. So, we recognise, in the first part of our curriculum, that we need to look at the child’s development in the round, including their physical development. And that’s really important for that child in building self-confidence and beginning to develop a love for physical activity. Of course, the very nature of the foundation phase means that we don’t expect our children to sit at a desk. That stage of their education is all about moving around inside the classroom, crucially outside of the classroom, and physically doing and learning through doing and learning through play. So, I think we fundamentally understand that important principle.”<sup>63</sup>

**95.** The Cabinet Secretary for Education confirmed that she had met with the developer of SKIP Cymru and was prepared to consider a pilot programme but was reluctant to impose any one approach:

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<sup>61</sup> RoP, 19 April 2018, paragraph 18

<sup>62</sup> Dr Wainwright noted these costings were based on 2017 prices and may vary slightly.

<sup>63</sup> RoP, 13 June 2018, paragraph 41

“It certainly, on the face of the evidence that is available to date, seems to have had an impact. We have had discussions with the developer of the programme to see whether they would put together a proposal that we could look at—a small pilot—to be able to test some of that a bit further. We’re more than content to continue to have those conversations about it. But, again, I don’t believe that we as a Government should be singling out individual interventions and saying to a school, ‘That is the approach that you have to take.’ But it could be a programme that, with further research and further piloting, could be something that could be seen as best practice, and that would need to be shared then across the profession.”<sup>64</sup>

**96.** We received a number of written submissions<sup>65</sup> supporting the SKIP programme.

**97.** The Welsh Government’s Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales consultation states it plans to:

“Embed the importance of physical activity and well-being in the Foundation Phase and work with practitioners to identify and share excellence in practice in both childcare settings and in primary schools, working with the Foundation Phase Excellent Network.”

**98.** Ray Williams, a successful Welsh weightlifter and the national weightlifting coach for Wales, advocated a ‘radical’ approach:

“I would start at the age of five, and I would have three mandatory lessons a week where the youngsters do fitness training. And it wouldn’t be with footballs: it would be a 10-minute mobility warm-up, a 20-minute main theme, and a 10-minute cool-down. That is the way I would do it, and, by doing it at that age, by the time they’re 11 and 12 it’ll be like brushing their teeth. It’ll be so natural to them, it’ll be a part of their growing up, and I think that is the way I would approach it.”<sup>66</sup>

**99.** He went on to talk about a personal fitness passport which could follow a child through school:

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<sup>64</sup> RoP, 3 June 2018, paragraph 87

<sup>65</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 10, 11, 12, 27

<sup>66</sup> RoP, 8 February 2018, paragraph 31

“A youngster, if they’re five, could have [ ] their little fitness passport that follows them through key stage 2, and when they go to year 7, they can see how they’ve progressed through the stages.”<sup>67</sup>

**100.** We saw an example of this in Bassaleg School in Newport, where they were using the dragon testing protocol to assess the levels of fitness in Year 7 pupils and developing tailored exercise programmes, with reports sent home to parents and an element of continuous assessment.

### Time and priority allocated to physical activity

**101.** A clear theme in the evidence received is that PE and activity opportunities are generally not receiving sufficient priority in schools, and are being squeezed out of the school timetable due to other curriculum pressures. We heard reports of reductions in the time allocated to physical education in both primary and secondary schools, with many noting that the recommended two hours a week is not statutory (and therefore rarely adhered to).

**102.** Evidence from Marion Clark stated:

“The 120 minutes per week has been around as a recommended time for curriculum PE for many years but it is not statutory. This means that headteachers can decide how much time can be allocated for PE.”<sup>68</sup>

**103.** She went on to say that while the 120 minutes are usually delivered in Years 7, 8 and most Year 9s, provision drops to one session per week in Years 10 and 11, “which headteachers will explain away as being necessary due to work for exams”.

**104.** An unnamed individual told us:

“As a PE teacher and middle manager I’m constantly battling with senior managers for more curriculum.”<sup>69</sup>

**105.** They went on to say:

“Due to the changes constantly being made in education, pupils are doing far less physical activity in PE lessons than ever before. Curriculum constraints have seen my school personally lose one lesson a week for Key Stage 3 pupils. Having to include literacy, numeracy and

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<sup>67</sup> RoP, 8 February 2018, paragraph 101

<sup>68</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 06

<sup>69</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 02

now the digital framework is further reducing the time pupils actually spend being physically active.”<sup>70</sup>

**106.** Tim Pratt, from the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), painted a similar picture:

“I think one of the biggest issues that we face at the moment is to do with the accountability system that we have currently, which is pushing more and more schools into putting more and more time into important things that the students need for exams, but at the expense of other areas. So, what we’re finding more and more is that, in order to provide extra time for numeracy or literacy, schools are saying, ‘Well, something’s got to go to give us that time, so we’ll take a bit out of PE, we’ll take a bit out of dance, we’ll take a bit out of music’ or whatever it is. And that is a major concern that, whereas 10 years ago, PE was one of those areas where there was a guaranteed amount of time and nobody would have thought of cutting that time, now we’re getting to the stage where, instead of, say three hours a week of PE in class time, for some students it might be down to one hour. It might even be one hour every other week.”<sup>71</sup>

**107.** A number of stakeholders suggested that a way to elevate the status of PE in schools was to make the recommended 120 minutes per week a statutory minimum, and for it to be included in Estyn’s inspection regime.

**108.** Marion Clark told us:

“If the 120 minutes became statutory all schools would have to do it. Estyn is also a very important driver for schools – if Estyn makes physical education a priority and makes it clear what they expect, schools will do it.”<sup>72</sup>

**109.** This view was shared by participants in the stakeholder event on 25 January 2018, who suggested that schools should have a KPI on physical activity and that Estyn should monitor physical activity levels in same way as attendance.

**110.** John Thomas, Her Majesty’s Inspector, Estyn, told us:

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<sup>70</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 02

<sup>71</sup> RoP, 25 April 2018, paragraph 12

<sup>72</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 06

“Well, I wouldn’t necessarily argue with that premise, and I think there are a lot of people in the field of physical education, physical activity, who would agree with you if you want to give this aspect of the curriculum that status. And it does come back again to what your priorities, or what the Welsh Government’s priorities, are.”<sup>73</sup>

**111.** He went on to say that it was also important to take account of the quality of the experience rather than focus solely on the amount of time involved, “you can get, let’s say, 120 minutes of not-very-good quality, or you could get 80 minutes of high quality”.<sup>74</sup>

**112.** It is not a statutory requirement for schools to assess the level of performance or physical fitness of their pupils.<sup>75</sup> The Welsh Sports Association told us:

“The current curriculum does not include any formal assessment of physical education (PE) in schools, meaning that while there are guidelines on the amount of time children should spend doing PE there are no obligations on schools to do so, and no measurement of the quality of the educational experience. The number of minutes spent doing PE is captured via Sport Wales’ School Sport Survey, but again, this is self-reported and could include the time taken to get changed etc, not just the time spent undertaking physical activity.”<sup>76</sup>

**113.** Professor Laura McAllister recommended that the 120 minutes target for PE becomes “a statutory expectation, not just guidance”. She states that the Sport Wales School Sport Survey shows that only 4 in 10 schools met the 120 minute guidance and no local authority reached the expectation on average overall for either primary or secondary education.

**114.** She concluded:

“Clearly this guidance needs to become a statutory requirement if it is to be more than a token consideration.”<sup>77</sup>

**115.** Professor McAllister also recommended that Estyn inspects quality and standards properly for PE and school sport. She reasoned:

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<sup>73</sup> RoP, 15 March 2018, paragraph 249

<sup>74</sup> RoP, 15 March 2018, paragraph 241

<sup>75</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 16 and 21

<sup>76</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 44

<sup>77</sup> Evidence from Professor Laura McAllister

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“Parents will then know what happens or doesn’t happen in their child’s school and in turn, can properly hold some feet to the fire and demand proper accountability.”<sup>78</sup>

**116.** The Cabinet Secretary for Education told us:

“Well, I think what’s absolutely clear—and schools know this, and I’m more than happy to remind our schools of it—is that PE, in the current curriculum, is a statutory element of the curriculum, alongside English, Welsh and maths. So, this is already a statutory element of our curriculum. Going forward, of course, in the new curriculum, it will form part of our area of learning and experience for health and well-being. And, Lynne, you would know much better because of your chairmanship of the other committee that each of those AoLEs has equal status.

I recognise that, sometimes, in the pursuit of—in secondary schools especially—grades associated with GCSEs, there can be pressure on timetables, and I would be very concerned if schools were not meeting their statutory responsibilities that, in law, say that they are to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, and that PE is a statutory element to the age of 16.”<sup>79</sup>

**117.** She also said, regarding Estyn inspections:

“You will be aware, Jayne, that last week, Professor Donaldson published his report on the future of the inspection regime in Wales, and we will be carefully considering as a Government our reaction to what Professor Donaldson is proposing, as, of course, will Estyn. But, clearly, as we move towards a new curriculum, how that new curriculum is assessed within school, by our regional consortia challenge advisers and Estyn, will be really important. Members will perhaps want to be aware that we are not just looking at what the content of the curriculum will be, but, crucially, how we will assess that—so, what are the developmental stages that we would be expecting children to demonstrate in each of the AoLEs as they progress through school?”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Evidence from Professor Laura McAllister

<sup>79</sup> RoP, 13 June 2018, paragraphs 47-48

<sup>80</sup> RoP, 13 June 2018, paragraph 65

## Break times

**118.** We also heard that reductions in lunch breaks and break times are common due to curriculum pressures.

**119.** Play Wales told us it is receiving increasing queries from parents and practitioners regarding the withdrawal of playtime (including lunch time play break) to shorten the school day, or, as part of a behaviour management policy. Play Wales says that for many children, school play time is the main chance they have to play, be active and socialise, and it believes the provision of adequate breaks for play should be mandatory and inspected as part of whole school inspection.<sup>81</sup>

**120.** Public Health Wales told the Committee:

“[...] there’s growing evidence about the shortening of school break times and that having a direct impact on physical activity levels, and we’ve got research in Welsh data that seems to suggest that that’s the case. So, what’s actually happening, to some extent, is that we’re shortening the school day in some areas, or at least parts of it.”<sup>82</sup>

**121.** Cardiff University reported that within schools, the time allocated to physical activity, the reduction in length of school lunch breaks and the limited promotion of active travel options have acted as barriers to increasing the levels of physical activity.

**122.** We heard that the length of school lunchtimes, which are vitally important for enabling pupils to eat well and participate in physical activity, had reduced in a number of Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan maintained schools. A health impact assessment of the duration and timing of school lunchbreaks undertaken in 2016 found that a fifth of schools across the area provided a lunch break of 30 minutes or less.<sup>83</sup>

**123.** We note that in Finland, many schools have added one long activity-based recess to their daily schedule, which is helping to increase physical activity levels.

**124.** When asked about this issue, the Cabinet Secretary for Education said:

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<sup>81</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 05

<sup>82</sup> RoP, 15 March 2018, paragraph 163

<sup>83</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 18

“I would be concerned if schools were making those kinds of decisions. I’m not aware from correspondence of this matter being raised with me previously. Ultimately, the organisation of the school day is a matter for the individual headteacher and the governing body. It is for the individual school to structure their day in a way that they feel is appropriate, in consultation with stakeholders. But, clearly, many schools recognise that the ability to have breaks and have access to physical space to do what children want to do naturally, which, in many cases, is to run around, is really important.”<sup>84</sup>

## Physical activity as a core subject

**125.** In June 2012, the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage announced the creation of the Schools and Physical Activity Task and Finish Group, convened to provide recommendations to the Welsh Government on how to develop the roles of schools in increasing the levels of physical activity in children and young people.

**126.** The group, chaired by Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, reported in 2013<sup>85</sup>. The group concluded that making physical education a core subject would give the subject the same status as mathematics, Welsh and English, with measurable and significant outcomes for making physical literacy as important a development skill as reading and writing. The Group also believed that Physical Education should also be supported by a National Physical Literacy Framework, in a similar way to the national frameworks for numeracy and literacy.

**127.** Commenting on the review in 2015, the then Minister for Education and Skills, stated that he had taken the recommendation to develop a physical literacy framework, and launched the Physical Literacy Programme for Schools in 2014<sup>86</sup>.

**128.** The Welsh Government’s evidence to this inquiry<sup>87</sup> referred to the Physical Literacy Programme for Schools (PLPS) which ran between 2014 and 2016, and “aimed to implement the recommendations from the Physical Activity Task and Finish Group Chaired by Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson”.

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<sup>84</sup> RoP, 13 June 2018, paragraph 50

<sup>85</sup> [Physical Literacy – an all-Wales approach to increasing levels of physical activity for children and young people](#)

<sup>86</sup> [Written statement – Curriculum task and finish group reviews](#)

<sup>87</sup> Health, Social Care & Sport Committee, 13 June 2018, Paper 1

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**129.** However, the one overarching recommendation of the group has not thus far been implemented: that “Physical Education becomes a core subject in the national curriculum”, and shares equal status with core subjects.

**130.** The review report stated that, as a core subject, schools would need to give greater priority to physical education, and as a result, teacher training and standards would improve, and progress would be regularly measured (by Estyn). The group estimated the cost of implementing this in 2015 at being £5 million per annum.

**131.** It was reported in the media at the time that while some teaching unions supported the idea in principle, they were worried that too many subjects on the core curriculum could dilute their importance<sup>88</sup>. In evidence to this inquiry, teaching unions told us that physical activity needs to be given a greater priority and they believe it should be a core element of the curriculum rather than a core subject.<sup>89</sup>

**132.** In written evidence to the Committee, Professor Laura McAllister stated that one of her recommendations is:

“Make Physical Education (PE) a core (compulsory) subject to properly fulfil the new Welsh curriculum’s ambition of creating the ‘healthy, confident individuals’ in the Donaldson report. This was the single, unequivocal and unanimous recommendation of Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson’s seminal report for the Welsh Government back in 2013 (I was part of this task force). This would have made Wales the first country in the world to make PE a core subject alongside English, Welsh, maths and science. At the time, Tanni said: ‘We wanted to be radical in what we said because this is about the long-term future of Wales.’”<sup>90</sup>

## New curriculum

**133.** A new curriculum is being developed for settings and schools in Wales. According to the Welsh Government, the curriculum will be available by April 2019 for feedback. A final version will be available in January 2020, and will be used throughout Wales by 2022.

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<sup>88</sup> [BBC News: Obesity: Make school PE a core subject, says Dame Tanni](#)

<sup>89</sup> RoP, 25 April 2018, paragraph 38

<sup>90</sup> Evidence from Professor Laura McAllister

**134.** Six new Areas of Learning Experiences (AoLEs) will be central to the new curriculum, one of which will be Health and Wellbeing.<sup>91</sup> The relevant draft key concept states:

“Physical confidence and competence has considerable lifelong benefits to health and well-being or ‘We experience the world through our body’.

Leading a physically active lifestyle consistently demonstrates significant health benefits. The development of physical confidence and competence underpinned by physical literacy supports learners to engage as fully as possible with their environments and make the appropriate decisions to enable this. In order to become physically literate, learners require development of confidence and motivation to engage in regular physical activity for life. They also need the physical competence to be able to do so effectively as well as the knowledge and understanding that underpins this and awareness of its health benefits. In working towards a lifetime of engagement and enjoyment in physical activity, learners will improve their physical, emotional and mental health and well-being. Physical literacy is fundamental to social and emotional decision making and 4 supports the development of positive relationships (for instance through team games) and resilience (for instance through competitive sport).”

**135.** Public Health Wales says the new curriculum development provides an opportunity to introduce objective measures of physical fitness at an individual child level to enable child centred goals and objectives to be set and monitored as a component of their educational achievement and learning.

**136.** The Cabinet Secretary for Education told us:

“I think there’s a really exciting opportunity with the development of the new curriculum to combine the opportunity to be physically active, but also to link that very clearly to why that is important, and giving people the motivation, the understanding and the reasons, especially for more reluctant participants, for why it is important for them to do that.

I think, again, it’s really important to recognise what these activities can give to a child as an overall part of our curriculum. It’s not just about

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<sup>91</sup> [Health and Wellbeing AoLE](#). Submission to Curriculum & Assessment Group: December 2017

health and well-being; it's about learning resilience and it's about learning to pick yourself up when you haven't been able to succeed, and to try again. It is about improved mental health; it is about life skills, like team building and leadership and being able to be social and make friends. So, these opportunities are so much more than just a stand-alone part of the curriculum."<sup>92</sup>

**137.** She said that it is important to recognise that not everyone has a particular interest in the competitive or traditional sports that are sometimes found in schools. Schools needed to be able to offer a wide variety of physical activity for youngsters to be involved in, whether that is dancing or a gym for people who like to be on a running machine, and all sports should be offered across all genders.<sup>93</sup>

**138.** She did, however, stress that the new curriculum would not be about imposing particular approaches on schools:

“One of the problems that we have in education, in many ways, is that the creativity of teachers has been driven out of them over recent years. So, sometimes, it's schools like Bassaleg, who are introducing these innovative approaches, where that happens despite the old curriculum rather than because of the new curriculum. I believe our new flexibility in the curriculum, for individual schools to think about what's best in their own community, will give a greater level of flexibility and allow those individual schools to tailor-make their curriculum especially to the needs of their individual community, recognising that each community will have a different set of needs.”<sup>94</sup>

## Choice of activities

**139.** Written evidence from Bassaleg School told us how it had used the responses from the school sport survey to drive change and take account of pupils:

“We have already utilised the evidence from our pilot projects at the school to listen to learner voice and implement the good practice in to increasing girl's participation and enjoyment of physical wellbeing.”<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> RoP, 13 June 2018, paragraph 68

<sup>93</sup> RoP, 13 June 2018, paragraph 56

<sup>94</sup> RoP, 13 June 2018, paragraph 72

<sup>95</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 50

**140.** This was supported in our discussions with pupils at the school, who told us that the school had a well-rounded approach, and being given an option was important, particularly for those who did not want to take part in formal exercise.<sup>96</sup>

**141.** A poll conducted by the Assembly Outreach and Education team of young people attending education sessions on the Assembly estate and outreach education sessions at schools across the country, found that 42% of those responding did have a say on the physical activity options offered at their school.

**142.** Anwen Griffiths, Estyn, told us that where schools had been more successful in increasing participation levels, this was largely as a result of pupils being able to give an opinion on the activities they wanted to do in PE, such as Zumba and street dancing.<sup>97</sup>

**143.** The Children's Commissioner and other stakeholders emphasised the importance of children and young people being involved in the development of the physical activity/sports offer in their schools.

**144.** The Children's Commissioner went on to suggest:

“On a practical level there could be some ‘set’ PE activities and a rotating ‘option’ perhaps each term or year, to allow for sports that have become associated with a particular gender to be undertaken within a single sex setting but available to both sexes , whilst also allowing for mixed sex options alongside. Schools could consult with their pupils as to how this would operate and the range of activities that could be offered.”<sup>98</sup>

## Teacher training

**145.** The review chaired by Baroness Grey-Thompson reported that the amount of time given to physical education in initial teacher training programmes is severely limited. The report states:

“The challenge to teach physical education to primary level children, who may have widely different levels of ability and enthusiasm, by teachers with relatively little training is significant. It would surprise many that a teacher would be required to deliver physical education at

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<sup>96</sup> HSCS Committee, 15 March 2018, Paper 7

<sup>97</sup> RoP, 15 March 2018, paragraph 229

<sup>98</sup> Letter from the Children's Commissioner for Wales, 21 December 2018

primary level, with perhaps very little practical experience, or such limited number of hours of training.”<sup>99</sup>

**146.** Baroness Grey-Thompson stated it was very worrying that teachers were expected to provide good quality physical education when they received as little as four hours instruction on this subject during their initial teacher training.

**147.** Professor Laura McAllister stated the following in written evidence as a recommendation:

“Ensure that all teachers are properly trained and professionally developed to make sure that PE and sport is always fun and enjoyable and includes everyone. It’s not that difficult and there is plenty of excellent practice out there to draw upon. There needs to be significant change to the amount of importance and training giving to PE during the initial teacher training process. We are currently expecting, particularly at primary level, people to be delivering PE with little to no training or confidence in doing so. When we all want to see qualified teachers leading every lesson we need to ask specifically for PE is a qualified teacher really qualified.”<sup>100</sup>

**148.** Witnesses to our inquiry also suggested that many early childhood teachers and primary school staff are inadequately prepared with the necessary knowledge and skills required to teach physical activity.

**149.** Rex Phillips, National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), told us that when he trained as a teacher, PE used to be part of the core training but that might have tailed off in recent years. He suggested that an alternative might be to bring in higher level teaching assistants who could provide that kind of physical activity, or assist in the provision of those physical activities, within the school timetable within the primary sector.<sup>101</sup>

**150.** John Thomas, Estyn, also thought that the amount of time dedicated to initial teacher education training for primary teachers to develop their competencies or skills in teaching physical education was probably quite limited,

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<sup>99</sup> Physical Literacy – an all-Wales approach to increasing levels of physical activity for children and young people

<sup>100</sup> Evidence from Professor Laura McAllister

<sup>101</sup> RoP, 25 April 2018, paragraph 47

but pointed out that this wasn't the only way they could acquire those skills. They could be acquired in ongoing service training as part of the job.<sup>102</sup>

**151.** Disability Sport Wales (DSW) also raised the need to improve teacher training, noting:

“We know that, certainly within the primary sector, teachers get only a small proportion of their teacher training allocated to sport and understanding how to deliver PE.”<sup>103</sup>

**152.** DSW say initial teacher training needs to include teaching about what inclusive provision looks like. DSW also highlighted its mini Disability Inclusion Training ('DIT') which it would like to see rolled out wider across schools.<sup>104</sup>

**153.** The Cabinet Secretary for Education acknowledged “there are two aspects: we need to do better, both in our undergraduate study and our undergraduate programmes”.<sup>105</sup>

**154.** She went on to say that she was currently recommissioning and re-accrediting all initial teacher education courses, so that anybody wanting to deliver initial teacher education in Wales in the future had been asked to submit courses for accreditation:

“So, we are seeing a radical reform of how we do initial teacher education across the piece—PE is just one element of it—but we really need to up our game in how we are training our teachers. But then, that's fine for those who are going to come out of that system, but we have a whole cohort of professionals who are already out there in our schools, and, of course, the new curriculum will mean that we'll need to develop and deliver a national approach to professional learning to get the profession ready for the implementation of the curriculum.”<sup>106</sup>

## Extending the school day

**155.** The possibility of extending the school day to incorporate physical activity at the end of each day, for example finishing at 4.30pm, was proposed by some

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<sup>102</sup> RoP, 15 March 2018, paragraph 283

<sup>103</sup> RoP, 19 April 2018, paragraph 214

<sup>104</sup> RoP, 19 April 2018, paragraphs 214-215

<sup>105</sup> RoP, 13 June 2018, paragraph 81

<sup>106</sup> RoP, 13 June 2018, paragraph 80

Members. This proposal received support from a number of witnesses. John Thomas, Estyn, told us:

“I certainly believe that you could make a very strong case for a longer school day that would support other activities as well as physical activities, but, equally, one needs to look at the input or the potential for clubs and sports associations to fill that gap and provide those activities after school. Because culture—traditionally, historically in this country, or in the UK, schools have been very much at the heart of running teams and clubs for pupils to engage in. If you go to countries on the continent, a lot of those pupils at the end of the school day go straight off to their sports clubs, their hockey clubs. So, it’s not only schools that can deliver it, but I think it’s a perfectly valid question to ask, ‘Are we creating the opportunities that we might with a longer school day?’”<sup>107</sup>

**156.** Sarah Powell, Sport Wales also viewed this proposal favourably, telling us:

“If we can have an enhanced school day—we’ve been talking about an extended school day or an enhanced school day, which enables children to stay on and enjoy sporting activities, cultural activities, art activities—it is that rounded piece that we want. To keep them until 5 o’clock, 5.30 p.m. when parents may be more appropriate to come and collect them, would be something we would really advocate. We’ve heard some feedback around, ‘Well, where would the workforce come from?’ Well, we’ve got a young ambassador programme, we’ve got NEETs, we’ve got a number of schemes that would enable us to access a workforce that could come in and work within those school environments.”<sup>108</sup>

**157.** Professor Laura McAllister is in favour of extending the school day, recommending in her evidence:

“Extend the school day to give space for extra-curricular sports (and arts, drama, music) to happen without being crowded out. Again, the Sport Wales School Sport Survey gives a very clear steer as to how participation can be increased for school pupils. 96% of pupils say they have a demand to do more sport but there are clear barriers to that. Pupils would take part in more sport if they didn’t have to catch a bus; if

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<sup>107</sup> RoP, 15 March 2018, paragraph 256

<sup>108</sup> RoP, 19 April 2018, paragraph 169

they didn't have to go home, if they had the right equipment, if their friends were with them, if they had more time or if clubs were easier to get to. All of these barriers to participation can be overcome through an extension of the school day.

We do not want to see an increased burden on the teaching profession, but by opening up schools as community hubs for sporting opportunities we can ensure a captive audience of school pupils are able to access new ways of participation. Extending the school day to ensure buses are timetabled appropriately to allow children to have access to sport and activity after school and link this to all 21<sup>st</sup> Century schools investments, past and present, should be open to the community both after school and on weekends. We need to see an opening of the school gates to a lifelong enjoyment of sport. There is clearly a vitally important role for school governors in ensuring that this happens.”<sup>109</sup>

**158.** Professor Simon Murphy of Cardiff University recommended setting up a pilot to monitor and observe the impact of extending the school day before rolling it out more widely, “because the benefits of that might not be the same for all of the school population, and it might have some unintended consequences”.<sup>110</sup>

**159.** The teaching unions were less positive about the suggestion. Rex Phillips, NASUWT, told us:

“Well, I think it's a little bit like the issue of the core subjects. It's the language that is used. 'Extending the school day' I don't think is the right language to use. 'Providing activities beyond the school day' is probably the better way of looking at it, because the school day is a day on which pupils are taught in the school setting. What we are very clear about is if you do extend activities beyond the school day, then those activities would be undertaken by, probably, instructors other than the teaching staff within the school. Because we've got to look at the contractual entitlements of our members—the 195 days, 1,265 hours.”<sup>111</sup>

**160.** Whilst broadly supporting the concept of more physical activity being available for children, Tim Pratt, ASCL, also raised some practical issues:

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<sup>109</sup> Evidence from Professor Laura McAllister

<sup>110</sup> RoP, 25 April 2018, paragraph 3

<sup>111</sup> RoP 25 April 2018, paragraph 57

“How do you ensure that it is equally available for all young people? How does it not have an adverse impact on the other work that the school does? There isn’t a simple answer to that. There is evidence to suggest that time taken during the school day for physical activity helps the work in the classroom. So, that is probably an element that needs careful consideration. Rex is right that if you go to teachers and you say, ‘By the way, from next year, you’re all going to have to work an extra hour a week’, that would probably not go down particularly well.”<sup>112</sup>

**161.** A number of witnesses raised issues about the more practical aspects of extending the school day, such as accountability for the premises and school transport. This was a particular issue for disabled pupils, as Michelle Daltry from Disability Sport Wales told us:

“We do have a significant challenge for disabled pupils in accessing after-school provision, extracurricular provision, where a significant number of disabled pupils are bussed in and out of school. So, those young people, the bus comes at 3.30 pm and after-school provision starts then, and that really impacts on the opportunity for those young people to continue their provision and to take part, even if they want to. So, in some of the more rural local authorities, every child is bussed in and out, but, for disabled pupils, that tends to be everywhere.”<sup>113</sup>

**162.** Acknowledging the points made by witnesses, particularly with regard to problems around school transport, the Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport told us:

“... the emphasis for us, of course, is to develop community hubs within schools, so that the after-school activity and the school-hours activity are co-ordinated. Indeed, there’s something very important, in my experience as a grandfather, where the young people feel that, if they are involved with an after-school activity, that is more voluntary, and is part of their choice of the kind of sport that they want to pursue, be it swimming, gymnastics, football or rugby—whatever it may be. And it’s very important, if I may say at this point, that there is always a choice of physical activities available for young people, because different kinds of

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<sup>112</sup> RoP, 25 April 2018, paragraph 79

<sup>113</sup> RoP, 25 April 2018, paragraph 231

activity is one of the most important solutions, in my view, to increasing participation.”<sup>114</sup>

**163.** The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services said:

“I think what I’d pose back is to say: is extending the school day the most effective intervention in this area? Because you’d want to understand what you’re trying to achieve in doing that. You’ve got to understand the cost for the staff to keep the school open, the impact on parents, and things like school transport. So, there are very practical considerations, in any event, about just what you’d need to do to do that. And then I think we need to come back to what works and would be most effective in terms of what already takes place within the school day—we’ve heard lots about that already in the questions Kirsty has already answered—and then what works in terms of outside the school day with that whole school community—not just what Kirsty talked about on access to those facilities, but the broader points we started off with, about the culture of that wider school community and the behaviour.

My view is, actually, that we have a significant piece of work and real improvement to be gained in terms of health outcomes, in terms of physical activity, in focusing on what we already do within the school day and what we already do with that school community. If there’s different evidence the committee has heard that, actually, extending the school day would be the most cost-effective intervention to deliver the improvements in physical activity we’d want to see, then I’d be very interested in hearing that and engaging with it. But, obviously, I start with a note of scepticism about whether that’s the right thing to do, rather than focusing on what we already have and improving that.”<sup>115</sup>

## Access to school facilities

**164.** A number of witnesses called for schools to provide wider community access to their facilities outside of school hours to allow for physical activity.

**165.** Evidence from Fields in Trust states:

“School facilities are a massive untapped resource and could address a shortfall in play and sport provision. Mechanisms should be explored to

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<sup>114</sup> RoP, 13 June 2018, paragraph 99

<sup>115</sup> RoP, 13 June 2018, paragraphs 96-97

require schools in areas of shortfall to open up their facilities to the community.”<sup>116</sup>

**166.** Welsh Sports Association told us:

“Whilst there exists a commitment to legislate to open school facilities to the community, our anecdotal experience shows that there remains a lack of appetite to do so. Again, the sport sector is keen to work with education to support them on this and would welcome any opportunities to engage further.”<sup>117</sup>

**167.** This view was supported by Welsh Netball, who also said:

“Whilst there exists a commitment to open school facilities to the community, actual reality shows that there remains a lack of appetite to do so. Again, Welsh Netball is keen to work with education to look at solutions and would welcome any opportunities to engage further.”<sup>118</sup>

**168.** The Cabinet Secretary for Education told us she was keen to ensure facilities are used more widely. She said a task and finish group had been set up to look at what the barriers are to being able to ensure that school facilities are available for use by the wider community and not just the school:

“So, we’ve got a task and finish group looking at that at the moment, about how we can have truly community-focused schools. And when I talk about community-focused schools, I don’t just mean, ‘We let out the hall.’ We actually mean truly part of a community, providing opportunities not just for the children who attend that school but the wider community, recognising that, in some areas, the school will have the only facilities that that community has got—that’s all there is within the community.”<sup>119</sup>

**169.** A subsequent letter from the Cabinet Secretary states that the task and finish group’s work will support development of updated guidance on community focused schools, due to be published in 2019.

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<sup>116</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 46

<sup>117</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 44

<sup>118</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 16

<sup>119</sup> RoP, 13 June 2018, paragraph 93

**170.** The Cabinet Secretary highlighted some examples from her constituency, where the local schools had taken over the running of facilities to prevent them from being closed:

“So, there is some really innovative practice, and we need to understand how we can break down the barriers to make sure that that’s the case across the piece, because those are the only facilities, sometimes, a community has.”<sup>120</sup>

## Our view

**171.** We agree with stakeholders that schools have a vital role to play in getting children and young people to be more physically active.

**172.** We are convinced that physical activity interventions need a strong focus on the early years, and heard evidence that there is a critical window of opportunity to influence activity levels before the age of 7.

**173.** We heard compelling evidence that Fundamental Motor Skills need to be taught at an early age, and there is a misconception that all the skills will develop naturally in childhood. We were concerned to hear views that there is currently a gap in the foundation phase in terms of teaching these skills, and believe this must be addressed.

**174.** We note that Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales talks about embedding physical activity in the foundation phase and sharing good practice. We do not feel this goes far enough, we need to ensure these essential skills are taught in every school.

**175.** We believe that programmes such as SKIP Cymru should be implemented across the country to ensure that every child develops the essential Fundamental Motor Skills they need to equip them for later life.

**Recommendation 5.** We recommend that the Welsh Government takes further action in the new curriculum to ensure that every child in Wales is enabled to develop the essential Fundamental Motor Skills required at an early age in school, and ensure that current gaps in the foundation phase related to these skills are fully addressed. We would support investment for programmes such as SKIP Cymru to be rolled out across the country to ensure that every school in Wales is able to adequately support children to learn these skills.

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<sup>120</sup> RoP, 13 June 2018, paragraph 94

**176.** It is clear to us that physical activity is not given enough priority in schools – this must change. The development of the forthcoming new curriculum offers a great opportunity to redress the balance and give physical activity the attention and priority it deserves.

**177.** We were very concerned to hear that the majority of schools are not meeting the recommended 120 minutes a week for physical education, and that reductions in the time allocated to physical education in both primary and secondary schools are commonplace, due to curriculum pressures.

**178.** We agree with stakeholders that the recommended 120 minutes a week should be a statutory requirement, making it clear that this a minimum target, and more activity should be encouraged if possible.

**179.** We also agree that to elevate the status and priority given to physical activity in schools, it must be inspected by Estyn; both to monitor compliance that the 120 minutes is being adhered to, and also to assess the quality of physical education experience.

**180.** It is disappointing to hear that reductions in lunch breaks and break times (which provide daily opportunities to get active) are also common in schools and we urge the Welsh Government to review how widespread this practice is in schools across Wales.

**181.** We also heard about the importance of providing an appropriate choice of activities and involving pupils in the development of the physical activity/sports offer in their schools. We agree it is vital to listen to the pupils' voice to improve engagement and enjoyment of physical activity in schools.

**182.** We note the work being undertaken by the task and finish group to look at the barriers to making school facilities available to the wider community. It is disappointing that there are some fantastic facilities across Wales but these are not available outside of school hours in many areas. We therefore urge the Welsh Government to ensure community-focused schools are a reality for everyone in Wales.

**Recommendation 6.** The Welsh Government should introduce a programme of investment in physical activity facilities for existing schools that are not part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools initiative.

**Recommendation 7.** The Welsh Government should ensure all secondary schools regularly consult pupils on the choice and range of physical activities available to them and ensure their views are taken into account.

**Recommendation 8.** We recommend that the Welsh Government makes the recommended 120 minutes of physical education in schools a minimum statutory requirement.

**Recommendation 9.** We recommend that the Welsh Government gives physical education a greater priority in the new curriculum and makes this priority clear to Estyn, and that physical activity should be given greater priority in Estyn’s inspection regime for schools. We believe that the inspection framework should include adherence to the 120 minute a week requirement, but also the quality of the physical education experience.

**183.** We were concerned to hear evidence that many early childhood teachers and primary school staff are inadequately prepared with the necessary knowledge and skills required to teach physical activity. It is vital that this is addressed, we welcome the Minister for Education’s admission that “we really need to up our game in how we are training our teachers” and urge that improvements in teacher training on physical activity are addressed as a matter of priority, particularly in primary schools. We agree with Disability Sport Wales that initial teacher training should also include disability inclusion training.

**Recommendation 10.** The Welsh Government should ensure that greater emphasis is placed on physical activity in the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme and as part of all teachers continuing professional development.

**184.** Some Members and stakeholders were attracted to the idea of extending the school day to allow for more physical activity, and felt it was an area worthy of further exploration, whilst recognising that there are a number of practical barriers which would need to be overcome.

**185.** All Members agreed that schools should provide wider access to their school activity facilities to the local communities to encourage more physical activity outside of the school day. We note that this is happening in some local authority areas and would urge the Welsh Government to ensure that this happens more widely and that lessons are learned from those schools that are doing this well.

**Recommendation 11.** The Welsh Government must make Community Focused Schools a reality for everyone, and ensure consistency of access to school facilities for physical activity opportunities beyond school hours across Wales. The Welsh Government should report back to this Committee on progress within twelve months of the publication of this report.

**Recommendation 12.** The Welsh Government should share good practice, where schools are providing wider access to their facilities, including solutions for overcoming difficulties relating to governance, staffing and transport arrangements.

## 5. Differences in boys and girls attitudes to physical activity

**186.** The 2015 School Sport Survey confirmed that a gap exists, with boys being more likely to regularly take part in physical activity than girls (52% compared to 44%, respectively), while the Welsh Health Survey (2015) revealed that only 31% of girls meet the recommended guidelines, compared to 42% of boys.

**187.** The 2018 School Sport Survey was published after we had taken evidence. It shows that 50% of boys are taking part in sport three or more times a week in comparison to 46% of girls. The survey states “Although direct comparisons cannot be made due to the new question dynamic, the figures suggest a potential close in the gender gap”.

**188.** In terms of attitudes towards sports, enjoyment of school based PE in primary schools is similar between sexes (75% boys vs 71% girls), but the picture changes at secondary level. Here, while 64% of boys enjoy PE, only 45% of girls report doing so.

**189.** Reasons put forward by witnesses for this difference include lack of female sporting role models, peer pressure and low self-esteem. Evidence from Women in Sport states that girls are much more likely to be self-conscious and by the time they are 14-16 years old, around one in three girls (64%) are unhappy with their body image.<sup>121</sup>

**190.** Written evidence from Estyn states:

“The Estyn report on girls’ participation in physical activity in schools noted that there are many factors that influence the take up of physical activities by girls in school. The historical development of sports, peer pressure, parental attitudes and the coverage of women’s sport in the media all have an effect. The report stated that many physical education teachers offer a predominantly traditional team games programme and that many girls would prefer greater variety including more creative and fitness activities. As a result, in some schools, there are notable numbers of girls who find excuses to avoid participating in physical education, especially in key stage 4.”<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 09

<sup>122</sup> HSCS Committee, 15 March 2018, Paper 5

**191.** Women in Sport’s research found that stereotypes are already emerging at ages 7-8 about girls and boys abilities to do sport and physical activity. It states that boys valued sport and achievement, whereas girls were more ambivalent.<sup>123</sup>

**192.** The Football Association of Wales Trust also talked about body image and self-esteem, saying:

“Messaging to girls is very different to boys with communications often placing a higher amount of focus on improving look and body image, as opposed to promoting mental wellness, empowerment, confidence, team playing and decision making.”<sup>124</sup>

**193.** While the Welsh Sports Association evidence states:

“Confidence issues can be a major barrier to participation for girls but if it can be overcome, there is real potential for growth - more than a third of girls in Years 7 to 11 (approximately 26,000 girls) say they would do more sport if they were more confident.”<sup>125</sup>

## Stereotypes

**194.** Many witnesses highlighted the need to move away from defining sports as “male” or “female”. BMA Cymru Wales told us:

“We believe that every effort should be made to move away from stereotypical views that are associated with dividing certain sports and activities along gender lines. In our view, every effort should be made to ensure that, irrespective of gender, every child and young person has access to their preferred sport or activity – whatever that may be – and that as individuals they receive encouragement to take part and pursue that activity.”<sup>126</sup>

**195.** Written evidence from Gwyn Harvey states that:

“Physical education (PE) in schools is dominated by a few team games – boys playing the high status national sports of football or rugby, and girls playing, the lesser, netball or hockey. His evidence also promotes his website [www.fairfootball.co.uk](http://www.fairfootball.co.uk), which seeks to reduce sexism and

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<sup>123</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 09

<sup>124</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 39

<sup>125</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 44

<sup>126</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 33

elitism in sport, by using football as a paradigm to demonstrate the simplicity modifying sports' rules to enable the equal participation by disparate groups, e.g. gender, ability, age, weight, etc."<sup>127</sup>

**196.** We heard about the lack of opportunity for girls to engage in a broad range of activities.

**197.** Laura Matthews, Insight and Policy Manager for Women in Sport told us:

“So, when I talk to girls, they generally say that they tell their teacher that they'd like to play football, say, and they're told, 'No, that's not part of what we offer here.' Some schools, or some girls, rather, have had success in standing up and saying what they would like, and their teachers have listened, but it's not really encouraged, I don't think, so much at schools, to have that kind of open discussion and dialogue about it.”<sup>128</sup>

**198.** She went on to say that this was not just an issue in schools:

“[...] it's about having those facilities and activities available for girls. So, at the minute, girls can often—even if they're interested in playing, say, football or rugby—struggle to find a club that will take them, or they have to join the boys' team, which can often feel a bit uncomfortable. So, there just isn't that range of support that's open to boys at the moment.”<sup>129</sup>

**199.** The Children's Commissioner told us that she was increasingly being asked for less gender-based PE:

“Girls are asking to do more football and rugby, some boys are asking for less football and rugby, and I've seen some real transformation schools that have thought, 'Actually, we don't know why we don't have a girls' rugby team', and the take-up's been huge when it's actually been offered.”<sup>130</sup>

**200.** However, the Welsh Rugby Union (WRU) said that despite its efforts to change perceptions and offer more opportunities for girls to play the sport, rugby in Wales has traditionally been seen as a “boys sport”, and participation numbers

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<sup>127</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 01

<sup>128</sup> RoP, 15 March 2018, paragraph 35

<sup>129</sup> RoP, 15 March 2018, paragraph 23

<sup>130</sup> RoP, 19 April 2018, paragraph 330

in the sport reflect this. In its view “gender-based bias still exists, and more needs to be done to challenge this from an early age”.<sup>131</sup>

**201.** The Football Association of Wales Trust’s evidence also states:

“There are however barriers that prevent larger numbers of children and young people participating in grassroots football. Not least that football continues to be perceived primarily as a sport for boys and men, rather than girls and women. Unfortunately, stigma and assumptions around sexuality remain prevalent. Consideration must be given to the language and behavior that promotes and encourages young people to play football regardless of gender.”<sup>132</sup>

**202.** This was supported by one of the participants at our stakeholder event, who gave us the example of her daughter and a friend, who wanted to play football but faced discriminatory attitudes not only from the boys in the team but the coach, who always picked them last because they were girls.<sup>133</sup>

**203.** Laura Matthews, Women in Sport, told us that gender stereotypes start to form at a very early age, with girls being brought up to believe they are not as good at sport as boys. She said it can be very subtle:

“It’s phrases like ‘you throw like a girl’ that very much make girls aware from an early age that they’re not as good as boys. And having that kind of thought in your mind really will put girls off from wanting to get involved in sport.”<sup>134</sup>

**204.** However, pupils at Bassaleg School felt that bias works both ways. They told us that they believed the boys were disadvantaged as they could not take part in dance classes or play netball.

**205.** We heard similar evidence from pupils of Ysgol Gyfun Llangefni, who took part in our webchat. They told us “there is a stereotypical image of what girls should do, and what boys should do. There isn’t enough of a chance for girls to try male sports and the boys don’t have the opportunity to try girl sports”.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 45

<sup>132</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 39

<sup>133</sup> HSCS Committee, 15 March 2018, Paper 6

<sup>134</sup> RoP, 15 March 2018, paragraph 12

<sup>135</sup> HSCS Committee, 19 April 2018, Paper 11

## Media coverage of women's sport

**206.** Many witnesses talked about the lack of female sporting role models in the media and a lack of coverage of women's sport. According to research carried out by Women in Sport "women's sport makes up 7% of all sports media coverage in the UK".<sup>136</sup>

**207.** It was acknowledged that there had been improvements but it was felt there was still some work to do in this area.

**208.** Laura Matthews, Women in Sport, felt "there's still a big difference between the amounts of men's and women's sports shown".<sup>137</sup>

**209.** Sarah Powell of Sport Wales suggested we need more female role models at all levels:

"We're talking to the media around how they profile women, not just every four years, when they're winning fantastic medals—and the women did win more than the men at the games—but how we give the back stories and enable role models at all levels, of all shapes and sizes and of all abilities. Things like *Gareth Thomas: Alfie's Angels* was a really good example of storytelling, but we need that for girls as well."<sup>138</sup>

**210.** During our discussions with pupils at Bassaleg School, some female pupils commented that giving greater attention to female sports and sport stars in the media would encourage more girls to take part in physical activity.<sup>139</sup>

**211.** This view was echoed by participants at our stakeholder event who told us that women role models were really important for encouraging girls to take-up and continue with sports and other activities.<sup>140</sup>

## Our view

**212.** We note that the latest Sport Wales School Sport Survey (published after our evidence sessions) suggests a potential increase in participation levels in physical activity by girls. This is an encouraging development but it is clear that further

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<sup>136</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 09

<sup>137</sup> RoP, 15 March 2018, paragraph 15

<sup>138</sup> RoP, 19 April 2018, paragraph 148

<sup>139</sup> HSCS Committee, 15 March 2018, Paper 7

<sup>140</sup> HSCS Committee, 15 March 2018, Paper 6

work is needed to fully close this gap. There is still a way to go before we can expect to see equivalent physical activity levels between boys and girls.

**213.** We have heard evidence that a big factor is the lack of choice of activities available, and that girls (and boys) need to be consulted regularly and involved in the design of lessons and physical activity programmes.

**214.** We are concerned that negative stereotypes about sport are still common, as was seen in the news recently about a young girl playing football who was subject to bullying and discrimination. This is unacceptable and needs to be stamped out.

**Recommendation 13.** We recommend that the Welsh Government works with Estyn to ensure it includes, as part of its inspection regime, an assessment of the choice of activities available in schools, equality of access for girls and boys and whether pupils are being consulted on the activities being provided.

**Recommendation 14.** The Welsh Government should work with Sport Wales to raise the profile of women's sport. This could include a programme of "female sporting role models" visiting schools to talk about their experiences and encourage more girls to participate in sporting activities.

## 6. Tackling other inequalities

### Disabled children and young people

**215.** Disability Sport Wales reports that activity levels of disabled children within Wales are lower than that of their non-disabled peers. The 2015 School Sport Survey noted that 40% of disabled children are hooked on sport, compared to 48% of non-disabled children.

**216.** The 2018 School Sport survey found that 45% of children with a disability or impairment are now taking part in sport three or more times a week (compared to 48% of non-disabled children).

**217.** According to evidence from Caerphilly County Borough Council, while typically there are lower levels of participation for those who have a disability, those who attend mainstream school will be given even fewer opportunities than children attending special schools.<sup>141</sup>

**218.** Disability Sport Wales states that barriers facing disabled children and young people include:

- limited availability of opportunity and choice;
- lack of knowledge and awareness;
- accessibility;
- perceptions of providers and parent linked to functional ability;
- social isolation;
- transport;
- cost; and
- appropriate “care” support.

**219.** It further states that it is aware that there remain reduced opportunities for disabled children and young people to participate and be included within their Physical Education lessons at secondary school; and there is frequent provision of

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<sup>141</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 24

health interventions (OT and physio sessions) provided to disabled children in primary schools in place of their PE sessions.

**220.** Michelle Daltry, Partnership Manager for Disability Sport Wales told us:

“[...] there have been some really positive improvements, but those are probably where the impairment is lesser, where it’s easier to include those children. We still get examples of young people who are taken from PE lessons and taken to physio instead, and because of the limited resources for physios in school, that tends to be the only opportunity. They tend to come from PE because, for some reason, PE is given less of an importance to a maths or an English lesson.”<sup>142</sup>

**221.** She went on to say that she was aware of examples of young people who were doing their sport and PE sessions with their support worker, or in a separate environment, when they probably could be included in the cohort with their peers:

“That opportunity to be alongside friends, et cetera, is really important. We know that there’s a strong incidence of young disabled people being bullied in school, and being around an adult all the time isn’t helpful with that.”<sup>143</sup>

**222.** Disability Sport Wales told us it wants the Welsh Government to place a greater demand on partners to ensure that programmes aimed at promoting physical activity for children, young people (and adults) are a) inclusive, and b) capture appropriate data which enables effective measurement and evaluation of disabled children and young people’s experiences. It states that investment should only be made in programmes which emphasise a genuinely inclusive (meaningful involvement) approach to the provision of physical activity (including sport). Witnesses told us:

“I still think there’s some stuff we can do, certainly around equality impact assessments, which will mean that, if we ask the right questions, we will make sure that the set-up and the establishment of projects and programmes are inclusive from the outset rather than delivered, reflected on, and then kind of a salt-and-pepper approach applied where there’s a reflection of, ‘Actually, has this done a good enough job for disabled children, adults? Perhaps not. What are we

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<sup>142</sup> RoP, 15 March 2018, paragraph 241

<sup>143</sup> RoP, 15 March 2018, paragraph 242

going to do to change it?’ rather than thinking about that at the beginning of the programme so that it’s established as inclusive from the ground up.”<sup>144</sup>

**223.** The Cabinet Secretary for Education told us that she had been disturbed to read the evidence from Disability Sport Wales:

“Our curriculum is a curriculum for all of our children. It’s an equitable curriculum, and therefore, as a result of the evidence that you have had, I’ll be asking officials to meet with Disability Sport Wales so that we can understand more fully, and have a conversation with them about the barriers children with a disability are facing in the current curriculum so that we can be mindful of those challenges as we’re designing the new one, and to see what opportunities we can take now. Because I don’t want to wait until 2022 to fix those problems—it’s what we need to do now in schools.”<sup>145</sup>

## Socio economic deprivation

**224.** Evidence from the Wales Institute for Physical Literacy suggests that children in areas of socio economic deprivation in Wales are more likely to be delayed in their physical development. It notes international evidence that children growing up in poverty are developmentally delayed in their fundamental motor skills, placing them at greater risk of negative health outcomes, physical inactivity and poorer academic achievement.<sup>146</sup>

**225.** Cardiff and Vale University Health Board states that environmental inequalities contribute to health inequalities. Children and young people living in the most deprived communities are more exposed to environmental conditions (for example, air pollution, living near major roads, limited access to open spaces) which negatively affect health and limits physical activity levels.<sup>147</sup>

**226.** The 2015 School Sports Survey reported that a higher percentage of children within the Free School Meal (FSM) quartile one (least deprived) were “hooked” on sport than compared to children within FSM 4 (most deprived) (54% vs. 43%).

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<sup>144</sup> RoP, 19 April 2018, paragraph 239

<sup>145</sup> RoP, 13 June 2018, paragraph 115

<sup>146</sup> Written evidence, PAYCP 04

<sup>147</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 18

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**227.** The 2018 School Sport Survey results do not suggest any progress, with 55% in the least deprived households compared with 42% in the most deprived households. Sport Wales calls this a “stubborn gap”.

**228.** Evidence from Children in Wales also states that young people living in deprived areas are less likely to participate in sport (particularly sports clubs) than their peers and that demand for sports facilities is lower for young people living in areas of relative deprivation. It suggests a number of barriers to accessing sports and physical activities for people living in poverty. These include:

- Unable to afford kit;
- Unable to afford travel to games/activities;
- Poor or costly transport links to engage in activities;
- Unable to afford to join activity groups in the community such as gym classes or football clubs;
- Fear of bullying because of using old/2nd hand sports equipment.<sup>148</sup>

**229.** Young people who took part in a webchat with us also talked about cost, particularly of joining clubs, being a barrier to greater participation.<sup>149</sup>

**230.** Children in Wales, along with a number of other witnesses,<sup>150</sup> raised concerns about the impact of losing the work carried out by Communities First teams in promoting physical and mental health and encouraging healthy lifestyles within areas of deprivation since the programme was phased out by Welsh Government. Written evidence from Cardiff University said it is likely that the loss of Communities First teams, particularly their community knowledge and community development expertise, will reduce delivery of community based physical activity initiatives within areas of deprivation.

## Young carers

**231.** Evidence from the Carers Trust suggests that young carers are less likely to undertake regular physical activity than their peers. It lists a number of reasons for this, including:

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<sup>148</sup> Written evidence, PAYCP 22

<sup>149</sup> HSCS Committee, 19 April 2018, Paper 11

<sup>150</sup> Written evidence, PAYCP 05, PAYCP 17, PAYCP 18

- Time away from caring – it is too difficult to have time away from the person they care for and having regular time away to attend a specific class or join a team is impossible to accommodate, even if respite care is in place;
- The needs of the person they care for come first – many young carers recognise the importance of regular exercise, however they do not view its importance as being greater than undertaking their caring role;
- Financial constraints – many young carers report that they do not have the money for either appropriate sports equipment or to join a gym or team. This includes school based teams where money is needed to go to away games;
- A lack of appropriate/interesting activities available at convenient times in accessible locations;
- Confidence – evidence shows that a quarter of young carers report being bullied at school because of their caring roles. Many young carers lack the confidence to participate in physical activities.

**232.** It goes on to say:

“Whilst the Social Services and Wellbeing Act places a legal duty on Local Authorities to undertake carers needs assessments, it is our understanding that many young carers remain unidentified and are therefore unable to access the support that they need. More needs to be done to support individuals and professionals to identify young carers and to ensure that they are encouraged to have a carers needs assessment.”<sup>151</sup>

## Our view

**233.** We agree with Disability Sport Wales that it is imperative that disabled children and young people are not excluded from their school PE sessions, extra-curricular clubs, and play-times, and a clear directive should be issued to schools on this point.

**234.** We also agree that Welsh Government and Sport Wales should stipulate in funding applications for physical activity programmes that investment will only be made in programmes which emphasise a genuinely inclusive approach to the

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<sup>151</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 19

provision of physical activity, and include equality impact assessments which ensure that considerations for disabled children and young people are incorporated from the outset.

**Recommendation 15.** The Welsh Government and Sport Wales should stipulate in funding applications for physical activity programmes that investment will only be made in programmes which emphasise a genuinely inclusive approach to the provision of physical activity, and include equality impact assessments which ensure that considerations for disabled children and young people are incorporated from the outset.

**235.** The Welsh Government's most recent remit letter to Sport Wales<sup>152</sup>, issued in February 2018, commits Sport Wales to invest effort and resources "where it is needed most, where there are significant variations in participation and where there is a lack of opportunity or aspiration to be active".

**236.** However, the lack of progress in reducing the deprivation gap in physical activity levels is disappointing and it is clear that further, concerted efforts are required to address this.

**Recommendation 16.** The Welsh Government should explore how the Pupil Development Grant could be utilised to help address the deprivation gap in physical activity levels.

**Recommendation 17.** The Welsh Government should review Sport Wales' efforts to reduce the deprivation gap in physical activity levels given the lack of progress.

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<sup>152</sup> [Welsh Government's remit for Sport Wales, February 2018](#)

## 7. Other barriers to increasing levels of physical activity

### Sedentary lifestyles

**237.** A number of respondents referred to increasing opportunities for sedentary behaviour in modern society such as the rise in digital technology use as having an impact on the amount of physical activity undertaken by children and young people.

**238.** Evidence from Betsi Cadwaldr University Health Board, states that the National Survey for Wales estimated that 59% of children use electronic devices for two hours or more on a weekday, “this would suggest that these children are predominately sedentary during such recreational time”.<sup>153</sup>

**239.** The Active Healthy Kids – Wales 2018 Report Card, which assesses a range of data sources on physical activity to give a picture of the state of the nation, rated Wales an “F” for sedentary behaviours, stating:

“80% of children/young people aged 11-16 years spend 2 or more hours sitting in their free time (e.g. watching TV, using a computer or mobile phone, travelling in a car or by bus, sitting and talking, eating and studying) on weekdays and 87% on the weekend.”<sup>154</sup>

**240.** Jasmine Langdon told us:

“In my school, [ ] we have an issue with children being overweight due to a lack of activity at home and many children choose a sedentary lifestyle playing on iPads and computer games rather than being physical.”<sup>155</sup>

**241.** Dr Julie Bishop from Public Health Wales said that one of the challenges facing society as a whole is that being active is no longer normal:

“So, we have a lifestyle, many of us, where we get up, we get in our cars or similar, we go to work, we sit in an office all day, we go home from work in our cars, we sit on the sofa watching tv or doing something with a computer, or whatever, and we go to bed. So, there is a really

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<sup>153</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 14

<sup>154</sup> [Active Healthy Kids – Wales 2018 Report](#)

<sup>155</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 12

powerful driver at the moment for sedentary behaviour, and that cultural shift is something we probably need to actively tackle through a range of different measures.”<sup>156</sup>

**242.** The Wales Principal Youth Officers’ Group suggested that a balance needs to be struck between the use of social media and other technologies and being physically active and physical activity providers need to recognise this by being relevant, engaging and fun.<sup>157</sup>

## Outdoor play opportunities

**243.** Several respondents referred to barriers in relation to outdoor activities and playing outdoors including safety fears, traffic volumes, time pressures and access to outdoor facilities, parks and open spaces.

**244.** Play Wales’ evidence states:

“Playing is one of the easiest and most natural ways that children of any age can engage in the necessary levels of physical activity. Research (Mackett and Paskins, 2008) suggests that children burn more calories when they are free to play than through almost any other activity, including organised sports.”<sup>158</sup>

**245.** Participants at our stakeholder event told us that modern social trends had decreased children’s likelihood to play – increased screen usage, neighbourhoods where speed and volume of traffic has increased and there is a need to look at what has happened in our communities to stop children from playing out. They suggested that adults were less tolerant to children playing out (no ball games signs, etc), and parents were more fearful about their children playing out either because of potential dangers or because of other people’s attitudes.<sup>159</sup>

**246.** Reference was made to the “Playing Out” scheme. Evidence from the Centre for Exercise, Nutrition and Health Sciences at the University of Bristol states that despite there being over 250 streets regularly “Playing Out” (playingout.net) across the UK, in Wales there is currently only one regular street in Abergavenny and three streets trialling Playing Out in Cardiff. It went on to say:

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<sup>156</sup> RoP, 15 March 2018, paragraph 194

<sup>157</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 20

<sup>158</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 05

<sup>159</sup> HSCS Committee, 15 March 2018, Paper 6

“Safe spaces to play close to home in addition to traditional greenspaces are needed to increase children’s time spent outdoors and physical activity. Temporary street play closures are a scalable intervention that can, with support for residents and local authorities, be rolled out locally and nationally.”<sup>160</sup>

**247.** The Children’s Commissioner also told us:

“Parents and children regularly speak to me about anxieties about children making their own way to school or to play outside, and that’s sometimes anxiety about stranger danger, but it’s particularly anxiety about traffic and safe places to play. I think play is an area that we have probably not thought through enough—its importance in terms physical activity—and, of course, there’s been a shift in how children play and a whole world of online play has emerged in children’s lives.”<sup>161</sup>

**248.** Evidence from Fields in Trust welcomed the Welsh Government’s “Play Sufficiency” legislation, which places a duty on local authorities to assess and secure sufficient play opportunities for children in their area but raised concern that beyond play opportunities, there is no requirement for local authorities to provide outdoor spaces which are vital for sport and physical activity.

**249.** It went on to say:

“Despite their clear value and benefit, our parks and informal recreational spaces are facing increasingly challenged futures. The Heritage Lottery Fund (2016) report 50% of park managers have sold parks and green spaces or transferred their management to others over the past three years. This is expected to increase to 59% of local authorities over the next three years; austerity measures have hit parks and playgrounds hard, councils are struggling either to maintain them or avoid the temptation of releasing their capital receipts to plug deficits elsewhere. Fields in Trust therefore calls for sufficient funding and resources to be made available to preserve and maintain our outdoor spaces.”<sup>162</sup>

**250.** Evidence from the University of Southampton states that environmental factors such as urban planning and design can reduce the levels of physical

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<sup>160</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 15

<sup>161</sup> RoP, paragraph 290

<sup>162</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 47

activity in children and young people due to intermediary factors such as concern regarding safety and lack of opportunities for active travel.<sup>163</sup>

**251.** Dilys Colbourne drew attention to the Barry waterfront development expansion which will bring hundreds of families to live in that area, and asked:

“What provision has been made for children to play (green play areas) and what will be available for young and older adults (skate board park, community hall for youth club, gymnastics, boxing, karate, etc)?”<sup>164</sup>

**252.** Both Cardiff and Vale University Health Board<sup>165</sup> and BMA Cymru<sup>166</sup> felt that the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 could help to increase physical activity levels as a result of the requirement for a national obesity strategy, and the introduction of the new statutory requirement to undertake Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) of key policies, plans and programmes.

## Facilities

**253.** Facilities were seen to be a barrier to increasing levels of physical activity among children (and adults), with the BMA stating that constraints in public funding may have had an impact by leading to the closure of sporting and leisure facilities and reductions in subsidies.<sup>167</sup>

**254.** Evidence from Dilys Colbourne highlighted the benefits of available sites and premises:

“I would point to Lee Selby the Champion Boxer from Barry and also his brother Andrew. Both raised in Gibbonsdown Barry, a deprived area. They were able to access local Boxing Clubs at the time they became interested in the sport. Those clubs have since closed.”<sup>168</sup>

**255.** Welsh Netball said in written evidence that the lack of facilities is a major barrier to increasing levels of physical activity among children (and adults):

“Netball provision has suffered significantly over the recent years, with depleting Local Authority leisure facility stocks. The sport needs facilities

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<sup>163</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 23

<sup>164</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 51

<sup>165</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 18

<sup>166</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 33

<sup>167</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 33

<sup>168</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 51

that are fit for purpose to function, (minimum 2 courts) without these facilities the participation of this sport for children in Wales is under significant threat.”<sup>169</sup>

**256.** The Football Association of Wales commented in written evidence that facilities remain an issue, in terms of the number across Wales, of a poor standard and very often with none or unsuitable changing rooms and toilets.<sup>170</sup>

### Funding of sport programmes

**257.** A number of witnesses saw funding, and particularly the short term nature of funding from Sport Wales, as a barrier to participation. The Welsh Sports Association told us:

“... one-year funding streams for partners, combined with the infrequent insight on target demographics, makes long term strategic planning for accurate intervention very difficult. In addition, Sport Wales’ funding criteria means that NGBs are not able to deliver sport within the curriculum, or help to train teachers to do so themselves. We feel that this is a missed opportunity in sharing the considerable skills and expertise of the sector to ensure that all children consistently received a high quality physical education experience which would ensure sustained participation in physical activity.”<sup>171</sup>

**258.** Similarly, the Welsh Rugby Union said that “having the ability to forward plan is critical, and having only a one-year funding commitment from Sport Wales does not favour long-term planning”. They also said that reduced funding and stretched budgets will have a negative impact, and increase barriers to children taking part in physical activity:

“The WRU, as well as other sports are being requested to do more with less. This places challenges on the sport, as there is still a requirement for us to deliver and maintain current activities to our member clubs and other partners.”<sup>172</sup>

**259.** Welsh Netball also highlighted the difficulties of one-year funding cycles on long term strategic planning, stating that Sport Wales’ funding criteria meant that

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<sup>169</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 16

<sup>170</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 39

<sup>171</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 44

<sup>172</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 45

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they were not able to deliver sport within the curriculum, or help to train teachers to do so themselves:

“There are so many exciting and creative ideas for Netball to engage with schools and really make a positive impact to children’s physical activity, but we just can’t achieve that under the current funding channels. This is a missed opportunity to ensure that all children consistently receive high quality physical education which has impact on sustained participation in physical activity, health and wellbeing.”<sup>173</sup>

**260.** When asked if Sport Wales had any plans to change the funding criterion streams, Sarah Powell, Chief Executive of Sport Wales, told us:

“Unfortunately, it’s not within our gift, so it is based on the one-year funding that we get from the Welsh Government. But very good news is that they have told us that they will be looking at longer-term funding agreements in line with Government funding, so, that is a real positive for us. What we do do is provide indicative long-term funding, so we will give up to four years indicative funding, but we do recognise that that is always with a caveat. So, it’s still very difficult for partners to be able to long-term plan. And we recognise that that’s an issue, but we have had very positive conversations now that our remit letter will take forward a longer-term funding programme.”<sup>174</sup>

**261.** Professor Laura McAllister noted a funding opportunity with the forthcoming Commonwealth games recommending in written evidence:

“The Barnett consequential that may be passed during Birmingham 2022 should be ring-fenced for sport and physical activity. There is a strong likelihood that public investment in the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games should deliver a Barnett consequential for Wales. It should be strongly argued that the Welsh Government lobby to ensure this funding is forthcoming and that it is ring fenced for sport and physical activity initiatives.”<sup>175</sup>

**262.** As part of our scrutiny of the Welsh Government draft budget 2019-20, we asked the Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport if he had considered moving to three-year funding cycles to support longer term planning, as is the case for

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<sup>173</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 16

<sup>174</sup> RoP, 19 April 2018, paragraph 177

<sup>175</sup> Evidence from Professor Laura McAllister

health boards in Wales. In response the Minister indicated that “it’s very difficult when you’re dealing with public funds when you don’t know the overall block for an appropriate period”.<sup>176</sup>

## Active travel

**263.** It was suggested that the limited promotion of active travel options can be a barrier to increasing levels of physical activity.<sup>177</sup> Participants at the Committee’s stakeholder event held on 25 January also felt that lack of appropriate infrastructure limited cycling or walking as commuting options.

**264.** The Children’s Commissioner for Wales raised concerns around active travel, saying:

“... we have good legislation on that, but we’re still seeing, I think, quite a slow delivery in some areas, and I’m particularly interested in children’s active travel to schools and to out-of-school activities, and that they’re feeling safe and the safe infrastructure being there. That’s going to require quite a shift in resourcing from our reliance on cars to a reliance on non-car travel.”<sup>178</sup>

**265.** The Active Healthy Kids 2018 Report Card scored Wales a D+ for active transportation, stating that “44% primary school children and 33% secondary school pupils travel actively to school (walk with an adult, walk on their own or with other children, cycle)”.<sup>179</sup>

**266.** We heard that active travel is one of the most promising ways to sustainably increase girls’ activity. Research from the Centre for Exercise, Nutrition and Health shows that girls are less likely to travel to school in active ways (walking, cycling or scooting) than boys, however, active travel to school makes a bigger contribution to girls’ activity (35.6%) compared to boys (31.3%). In addition, for both girls and boys, changing from car travel to walking provided an extra 16% of daily physical activity.<sup>180</sup>

**267.** Evidence from Natural Resources Wales suggested that children from 11 to 15 years old are facing greater restrictions on their independence than previous generations. It cited research by the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) at the University

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<sup>176</sup> RoP 15 November 2018, para 109

<sup>177</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 18

<sup>178</sup> RoP, 19 April 2018, paragraph 337

<sup>179</sup> [Active Healthy Kids – Wales 2018 Report](#)

<sup>180</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 15

of Westminster that found that only 25% of primary school children are allowed to travel home from school alone compared with 86% in 1971. It went on to say:

“Figures collected by the Institute in 1971, 1990 and 2010 discovered a large reduction in the youngsters’ independent mobility - the extent to which parents allow them to play and travel around in their local area without any adults. The study also found that the children have far less independence to get about alone when compared to German children of the same age.”<sup>181</sup>

**268.** Cardiff Third Sector Council highlighted a report produced by Cardiff University in January 2017 about Active Travel to School,<sup>182</sup> which identified a need for parents to be involved and for more opportunities for adults to use active travel as this would enable and encourage their children. It went on to say:

“If a parent has to use their car to get to work and they drop the children to school on the way, then because of the parents circumstances there are no options for the children. The Walking Bus which operates in some areas of Cardiff is one way of addressing this. The success of this does depend on if parents can leave the children at the Walking Bus earlier enough to also make their way to work.”<sup>183</sup>

**269.** Written evidence from Marion Clark highlighted the important part active travel can play in increasing physical activity in everyday life and that encouraging schools to actively promote this can be very beneficial. She went on, however, to point out some of the difficulties associated with active travel, particularly in rural areas:

“... active travel cannot be promoted in some schools given their location on narrow lanes in rural settings. Some people living in an urban environment may find this difficult to comprehend and could ask about where the cars could park for the children to walk/scoot the rest of the way to school when in fact there is no safe route to walk/scoot/cycle as the roads are narrow with very fast traffic.”<sup>184</sup>

**270.** Acknowledging the importance of active travel, Dr Julie Bishop of Public Health Wales told us:

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<sup>181</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 29

<sup>182</sup> [Active Travel to School](#), 31 January 2017

<sup>183</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 17

<sup>184</sup> Written evidence, PACYP 06

“... active travel to school has been a priority that we’ve picked up in the last 12 to 18 months, and we’ve brought all of the agencies working on the issue across Wales, under the auspices of the active travel board, together. Because one of the things we picked up was that lots of people are doing things, but they’re all doing it on their own, and they’re not talking to one another about it. So, we wanted to try and make sure that we had a clear understanding about where those barriers are.”<sup>185</sup>

**271.** She agreed that opportunities for rural schools are very different to an urban school but said:

“... it’s about starting that conversation at the school level and involving the community around the school, the parents, and also the other agencies like Living Streets and Sustrans and all of those bodies that are actively there to support schools, but we’re not making the best of at the moment.”<sup>186</sup>

**272.** The Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee recently concluded post legislative scrutiny of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013. The Committee heard that only 8% of schools are engaged in the Active Journeys to School Programme. It found that nearly 5 years after the Act became law, the numbers of people walking and cycling to work or for other essential journeys are static, and in the case of children travelling to school, have reduced. Only 37% of young people surveyed walk to school most days.

**273.** The Committee heard concerns that the Welsh Government funded 21st Century Schools Programme has missed opportunities to encourage active travel. Cardiff County Council told them:

“To date there appears to have been no specific requirement for new school projects funded through the programme to be integrated and connected with local active travel networks. Consequently, construction of new schools has focused on development within the site boundary and school gate measures only, with limited funding available for offsite improvements for active travel.”<sup>187</sup>

**274.** One of the Committee’s recommendations was that the Welsh Government should strictly apply active travel requirements when considering planning

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<sup>185</sup> RoP, 15 March 2018, paragraph 99

<sup>186</sup> RoP, 15 March 2018, paragraph 102

<sup>187</sup> [Post Legislative Scrutiny of the Active Travel \(Wales\) Act 2013 – June 2018](#)

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proposals for strategic programmes such as 21st Century Schools and the new Metro system, ensuring infrastructure and facilities are considered core outputs.

## Our view

**275.** We note the concerns of stakeholders that one-year funding streams from Sport Wales makes strategic, long-term planning difficult, and we agree that funding which is only confirmed for the short-term can have a negative impact on the effectiveness and sustainability of projects.

**276.** As part of this inquiry, we have considered the facilities available for use by young people. In particular, we have reflected on the importance of appropriate space for play being taken into account when planning new developments.

**277.** We believe that safe and accessible green spaces should be provided where any new substantial housing is to be permitted in order to ensure that a lack of space for play is not a barrier to increasing the levels of physical activity among children in Wales. We are aware of bad practice examples of instances where new housing developments have failed to provide appropriate spaces to play.

**278.** As we stated in our recent draft budget scrutiny report, we are disappointed that the Welsh Government has not chosen to earmark the consequential funding it receives from the soft drinks industry levy for tackling obesity and improving levels of physical activity, and we understand that Wales is the only UK nation that has not taken this approach. This is, in our view, a missed opportunity. We urge the Welsh Government to reconsider its position on this, and ensure funding from the levy is utilised to increase physical activity and reduce the burden of obesity in Wales.

**Recommendation 18.** We recommend that the Welsh Government makes arrangements to put in place longer-term funding arrangements to enable Sport Wales and its partners to plan more strategically.

**Recommendation 19.** We recommend that the Welsh Government review the use of Section 106 agreements to see if they are being utilised by local authorities to ensure the provision of safe and accessible green spaces in new housing developments.

**Recommendation 20.** Page We urge the Welsh Government to reconsider its position on the use of consequential funding from the soft drinks industry levy and commit to utilising it to increase physical activity and reduce the burden of obesity in Wales, as has been done in other parts of the UK.