8 April 2019

Nick Ramsey AM
Chair
Public Accounts Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff CF991NA

Dear Nick

I am writing to you as an update to recommendation 14 of the Public Accounts Committee, Scrutiny of Sport Wales Accounts 2016-17. As you will recall, the recommendation was that Sport Wales would share the outcome of the evaluation of our Young People’s Programmes with the committee. I am delighted to be able to do so today. Enclosed is a bilingual copy of the detailed summary of the evaluation. Should the committee wish to review this in electronic form I would be more than happy to arrange this.

As you and your fellow committee members will see from the report’s findings, there are a significant number of positives identified as a direct consequence of the programmes we have invested in.

- They have helped develop the skills and confidence of young people and have ensured Sport Wales are an organisation with sector leading expertise in supporting behaviour change within this cohort of society.
- They have developed impressive community participation and important education resources.
- They are providing value for money as a major part of the extracurricular sporting offer with the recognition that current levels of participation in extracurricular sport and physical activity would plummet without the Active Young People Programme investment.
- The Young Ambassadors programme is thriving. They can be a voice for the needs of learners to inform the health and wellbeing curriculum at local level.
- The Active Young People Programmes’ connection to education is critical. They have contributed a lot to curriculum resources, workforce skills, and promoting physical literacy as a key concept.

In addition to the positive evaluation of the programme’s delivery, what is also very pleasing to share with the committee, is the recommendations of how these programmes can support a future approach to physical activity in Wales. We will take heed of the recommendations, including that;
• More can be done to ensure that good and best practice is shared and implemented, and that the Active Young People Programmes’ meet the needs of groups with low levels of participation.

• Active Young People Programmes’ connection to health policy and practice should be actively developed and leveraged in pursuit of the national well-being goals.

• The Active Young People Programmes’ are strongly aligned with the well-being objectives of the Public Services Boards and other public bodies, but the actual connections with them have yet to be made. This is potentially an area for significant future development.

• AYPPs should be central to delivery of the new Vision for Sport and the new regional delivery arrangements being implemented by Sport Wales. AYPPs can be built on and developed, and their impact enhanced.

This evaluation comes at an important time for reviewing how we collectively engage young people. Both the Welsh Government’s ‘Health Weights: Healthy Wales’ consultation, and the Health Committee’s physical activity of children and young people report, place a great deal of importance on the education setting as a primary opportunity to support the physical activity of children. The focus and proven effectiveness of Sport Wales’s Active Young People’s Programmes are key components in responding to those challenges. Therefore, these types of programmes, and the opportunities we afford young people, will be a central commitment of the new Sport Wales strategy.

I hope the committee find the evaluation informative. In closing, I would also like to extend an invitation to the committee to view the work of our young people’s programmes in person, in order to see first hand the positive impact the report highlights.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Powell
Chief Executive
Executive Summary

Background to the Review

The Active Young People Programmes (AYPPs) are long standing and have been regularly reviewed. As part of its ongoing commitment to their development, Sport Wales commissioned us to assess the Programmes contribution to community sport and physical activity, their impact across the Welsh Government’s priorities and well-being goals, and whether they can achieve greater impact.

The AYPPs are a critical £5m p.a. investment by Sport Wales that are designed to stimulate and sustain sports participation for young people in Wales, principally in the school setting. Funded by the Welsh Government, and previously the National Lottery, they are delivered through local authorities and focus on both primary and secondary school levels, reaching tens of thousands of young people annually. They target those less likely to get involved in school sport. Initiated as supplementary programmes, they now perform a mainstream function in helping to get and keep all young people active and healthy. The approaches and relationships developed through the AYPPs are envied by sport experts we interviewed in other jurisdictions, and valued by young people, schools and local authorities. The new Vision for Sport in Wales provides a significant opportunity to further develop and enhance the AYPPs’ approach in a very challenging financial climate.

Key messages from the Review

❖ **Change and transformation**: The AYPPs have been transformed over two decades to reflect experience gained in their delivery, improved insight into the needs of young people, and the changing policy context in Wales. They have moved from a national approach of discrete and separate ‘programmes’ to a more flexible partnership model which enables local authorities to deploy resources from across programmes in response to local needs.

❖ **Value for money**: The AYPPs provide good value for money and they have delivered and evolved despite budget reductions. They are core programmes and provide a major part of all extracurricular sport and physical activity for young people. Current levels of participation in extracurricular sport and physical activity would plummet without the AYPP investment given the extent of participation which it directly supports.

❖ **Workforce**: The experience and skills of the AYPP delivery workforce are critical. This value needs to be retained and developed and given greater continuity.

❖ **Local variety**: There is great variety in delivery approaches at local level. This fosters innovation and enables a focus on local priorities and needs. More can be done to ensure that good and best practice is shared and implemented, and that the AYPPs meet the needs of groups with low levels of participation.
❖ **Community participation:** A focus on community participation opportunities beyond the school setting has become increasingly important. Community participation levels are now often higher than school-based extracurricular participation. Most local authorities are working with external partners to tackle areas of need such as gender, disability, poverty, Welsh language, and ethnicity, and have a strong desire to address mental health issues and improve whole family engagement.

❖ **Young Ambassadors:** The Young Ambassadors programme is thriving. It is now part of the core work of the AYPPs, even without dedicated funding (although they are resourced through the AYPPs). The young volunteers have in part helped to make up for shrinking employed workforce resources. They have also resulted in good learner outcomes and provided a strong voice for young people within the AYPPs' 'system'. They can be a voice for the needs of learners to inform the health and wellbeing curriculum at local level.

❖ **Education:** The AYPPs' connection to education is critical. They have contributed a lot to curriculum resources, workforce skills, and promoting physical literacy as a key concept. The new curriculum and its accountability framework provide a major opportunity to enrich their role both in sports participation and in collateral educational benefits such as attendance, values, and behaviours. Physical literacy has a key role in connecting curriculum and extracurricular activities, and to confer educational legitimacy on extracurricular sport and physical activity.

❖ **Health:** AYPPs' connection to health policy and practice should be actively developed and leveraged in pursuit of the national well-being goals. The joint action plan between Sport Wales, Public Health Wales, and Natural Resources Wales could provide the vehicle for this greater connectivity.

❖ **Well-being objectives:** The AYPPs are strongly aligned with the well-being objectives of the Public Services Boards and other public bodies, but the actual connections with them have yet to be made. This is potentially an area for significant future development.

❖ **Vision for Sport:** AYPPs should be central to delivery of the new Vision for Sport and the new regional delivery arrangements being implemented by Sport Wales. AYPPs can be built on and developed, and their impact enhanced.

**The AYPPs and their development since 2000**

The major AYPPs have been Dragon Multi Skills and Sport (focused on primary schools) and 5x60 (secondary schools), at around £1m. p.a. and £4m. p.a. respectively. The AYPPs were originally designed to be primarily extracurricular programmes, implemented to provide sport/physical activity outside of the school curriculum. But the extent of Sport Wales' interventions has gone well beyond that, as seen in the diagram below.
The timeline of intervention stretches for nearly two decades and includes major contributions to mainstream Physical Education (PE) in relation to curriculum resources, workforce skills, and quality standards (through the PE and School Sport Programme (PESS) and later the Physical Literacy Programme for Schools (PLPS)), plus the creation of Young Ambassadors. We treat all these collectively as the 'AYPPs'. They underline the critical importance of the school setting in getting every child physically literate as well as the importance of action within the school setting on issues such as teachers' skills and good curriculum resources. They have developed a comprehensive repertoire to encompass a wide age range and a broad set of supports, as summarised in the diagram below.

The growth and then contraction in the number, scope and resourcing of the AYPPs from 2000 to 2018 is in part a function of the pattern of increasing public expenditure through the 2000s, and the long period of austerity which has followed. It also illustrates some of the overlapping policy themes including the emergence of physical literacy as a major conceptual underpinning of sports policy, the creation of the regional educational consortia, and the increasing emphasis on broadening the range of sports and of skills encouraged through Dragon Sport. The early focus on national programmes, locally delivered, has been transformed. The focus now is partnership between Sport Wales and local authorities to encourage sport participation by all young people including (especially) those who are less active into long term patterns of positive physical activity. The new Vision for Sport is the platform for further development and even more flexibility at local and regional level.
The original ‘programmes’ are now best understood as part of a flexible repertoire of activities and approaches which local authorities deploy to best effect as they see it in light of their particular local contexts and challenges. This allows for a variety of local approaches. But the core purpose of encouraging participation along sustainable pathways through a partnership and an outcome-based approach is common across all local authorities.

Current delivery and outcomes

The delivery workforce: The AYPPs are delivered through local authorities and, for the most part, the grants received from Sport Wales are used to employ staff with sport development skills. In most local authorities, staff are deployed to work with a cluster of schools or across a part of an authority. Officers also have responsibilities for clubs, specific sports, women and girls, physical literacy, recreation, and so on. This ‘patch and pathway’ model seeks to combine a local focus with links into longer term routes to sustainable participation. The most important resource is the people who deliver the AYPPs. Programme funding to resource activities is a minimal part of the budget, and the AYPPs’ teams aim to achieve a lot with relatively small funding pots. The evidence indicates that more could be done through targeted additional investment, especially given the significant decrease in the workforce as a result of tighter funding. The skills of the local authority delivery teams have changed to reflect changes in approaches to the delivery of the programmes. Their experience is critical to the AYPPs’ ongoing success, and this value needs to be retained and developed, and given greater continuity. Ideally additional staff would be recruited in the fields of physical literacy and pedagogy to support implementation of the new curriculum.

Funding aspects: Funding constraints mean that many local authorities have restructured staff and moved to delivering the AYPPs across the ‘whole pathway’ rather than having specific school-based
officers for 5x60 or Dragon Sport. This change was difficult to manage but is now recognised to be a far better use of resources and to better reflect the thinking behind the new curriculum. Funding allocations were previously weighted in favour of secondary school age pupils, but this became out of line with emerging needs of young people and their families and has been re-balanced in many authorities. Many AYPPs’ teams are making efforts to connect to family initiatives, and physical literacy development has resulted in most now working with children in early years and pre-school settings as well as at school age. Overall, the scope of the AYPPs’ role has stretched considerably - a ‘young person’ can be anything from 0 to 25. This is beneficial but carries a risk of over-stretching staff and resources.

Community aspects: A focus on community participation has become increasingly important.

Young Ambassadors: The Young Ambassadors programme is also thriving.

Outcomes: In terms of outcomes, several local authorities do take steps to measure their effectiveness. But there are no national measures for assessing longer term impact outside of the School Sport Survey. However, the survey itself provides a strong evidence base (with 100,000+ respondents) which has provided high quality insight to inform the AYPPs with greater understanding of the pattern of activities of young people, the barriers and enablers to participation, and the differences in participation rates based on age, gender, ethnicity, disability and social group. Local authority reports and individual school-based reports allow local authority teams to create a local differentiated offer to meet the needs of young people. The AYPPs support now represents two thirds of all extracurricular participation at secondary school age – a huge achievement but one which can place strain on the quality of provision.

The AYPPs can be credited with contributing significantly to increasing young people’s sports participation. A strong ethos of ‘listening’ to what young people wanted has been a major part of the success of the programmes. The cost per activity ‘event’ has reduced radically for both Dragon Sport and 5x60 and is now very similar to the current headline ‘cost’ of every free swim. While the quality of Dragon Sport and 5x60 programme management data is variable, they indicate a high and growing level of Dragon Sport- related activities and a high but declining rate of 5x60 activities. Nationally in 2011, Sport Wales’ School Sport Survey recorded only 27% of Year 3 to 11 pupils participating in sport and physical activity three or more times a week outside of the school curriculum. This had risen to 40% by 2013 and to 48% by 2018. Further, and although the evidence is not conclusive, there has also been an increase in overall sport participation amongst the wider population of Wales which may in part be attributable to earlier phases of the AYPPs.

AYPP connections to education and to physical literacy

The relationship between education and the AYPPs is critical because:

• Being school based creates access to the AYPPs for all children as potential participants, and confers legitimacy on the activities;

• There are potential synergies and complementarities between school-based PE and the extracurricular AYPPs both in terms of facilities and resources, and also in the content of activities and the target participants – for example with the AYPPs focusing on the needs of the less active;
• The AYPPs can be the connector between school and community-based activities, as well as steps along the pathway to sustained adult sport participation;

• There is potential for a continuity of approach between the curriculum and extracurricular child development in terms of the skills and values and behaviours which sport can contribute to;

• Extracurricular sport can foster attributes in children of direct benefit to their ‘mainstream’ educational attainment and attendance; and

• Sports development activities have been central to uplifting (and sometimes substituting for) the skills of teachers to teach and supervise sport and PE.

The current position: Despite being school based, the connection between the AYPPs and education teams is patchy, although it is improving. Relationships with schools are still very dependent on how sport and physical literacy are viewed by particular headteachers. The Sport Wales contribution to curriculum and workforce development has effectively concluded at school level (and is deeply missed by teachers) now that the Welsh Government’s funding has ended. Sport Wales continues to champion ‘physical literacy’ as a concept, but despite effort and investment the approach to physical literacy is inconsistent across Wales. It has not yet established itself as a clear and compelling way of thinking about young people’s physical activity and development. The resource to support the widespread adoption of physical literacy is increasingly thinly spread.

The current curriculum: The AYPPs focus on extracurricular sport but Dragon Multi-Skills and Sport and Play to Learn had important curriculum aspects and (more latterly) a focus on physical literacy. The support given to schools to deliver the early years curriculum has also been critical. But there is not currently any obvious connectivity of extracurricular sport to the mainstream curriculum. There is a lack of guidance and of an accountability framework, and this leaves a gap where there should be a more joined-up approach.

For some authorities there are three key ingredients to the AYPPs’ success - using existing school facilities and staff, the flexible and multi-agency partnership model, and involving the whole family. There are some excellent examples of mutual benefits between sport and education, and between the AYPPs and school-based PE. In one, the AYPP officer describes her role as “creating and developing sustainable community activities within the vicinity of schools and then feed in pupils from secondary and primaries”. This captures the essence of what the AYPPs are seeking to achieve. The concern is that too many schools with ever tightening resources leave sport/education synergies to Sport Wales’ investment rather than leading for themselves and using Sport Wales’ expertise in support. Austerity has had a significant impact on local authorities’ ability to deliver and many are now solely reliant for extracurricular sport development on Sport Wales’ investment in the AYPPs.

There is inconsistency across local authorities in the degree of commitment to leverage sport for its own sake and for collateral educational benefit. One helpful, though not essential, aspect to achieving a good connection is where there is a good working relationship at the ‘departmental’ level. Of the 22 local authorities, five have sports development teams based in education. Most are based in community or leisure departments. However, the critical success element appears to be that sport is valued at the institutional and policy level, and that people understand its impact and value, and the value for individuals, rather than any specific departmental location.

The new curriculum and physical literacy: The lack of connectivity between sport and the existing curriculum can potentially be addressed through an emphasis on physical literacy, and the implementation of the new curriculum. The new curriculum needs shared terminology between
sport, health and education to provide a framework for planning and collaboration. The philosophy of the new curriculum will need to be reflected in extracurricular activities and is also a great opportunity to embed physical activity into the broader curriculum. The continuing challenge for Sport Wales is to translate the concept of physical literacy to the reality of activity for all.

However, along with the opportunity there is a significant threat that physical activity could be reduced in importance if it is not embedded in the new curriculum effectively and forms part of the associated accountability framework. Estyn recognises that a lot of sport participation initiatives have been rather 'piecemeal' in implementation. Indeed, local authorities appear to give different messages to staff about the importance of sport. How accountability will operate in relation to the new curriculum will be critically important. The 2010 and 2017 school inspection frameworks mean that there is no specific PE subject inspection any longer, although lessons are observed and the findings from those contribute to the overall judgement of the school. Unless sport and physical activity are assessed effectively as part of the new curriculum it is less likely that they will attract appropriate attention and resources in schools.

**AYPPs' connections to health and well-being**

Sport Wales' objective to link health with sport is embedded in its Business Plan, and sport and health have a number of shared goals. This is not fully reflected at a policy and strategic level, although the joint Action Plan between Sport Wales, Public Health Wales, and Natural Resources Wales is a significant step forward.

At local level we found few strategic links between health and sport, despite the obvious and well evidenced potential synergies. Where connections were positive and strong this was a result of co-location, local strategic partnerships, or individual relationships. The linkage is particularly important for the new curriculum, and the level of priority given to physical literacy. There is a need for more clarity about the boundaries and connections between sport, physical activity and health, and how the impact of sport on health is quantified. A standards'-based approach could contribute a great deal. ‘Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes’ is a Public Health Wales flagship award, launched in 1999. A Healthy School is one that “takes responsibility for maintaining and promoting health – not only by formally teaching pupils but enabling pupils and staff to take control over aspects of the school environment which influence health”. There could be a major extension of this award to ‘Welsh Healthy and Active Schools’. This would be an opportunity to bring the two policy strands together in a practical way. Its development could be jointly resourced and stewarded by Public Health Wales, National Resources Wales, and Sport Wales, and linked also to the accountability framework for the new curriculum.
AYPPs and the Vision for Sport in Wales, and the Well-being Objectives

The Vision for Sport in Wales is "to create an active nation where everyone can have a lifelong enjoyment of sport". Each component of that is critical. The AYPPs should be central to this Vision because they connect to each element of it. The Programmes emphasise active sport participation of every child and aim to support children at all levels and to lay the basis for lifelong participation. In addition, the AYPPs have deliberately been tailored to the expressed views and needs of children and young people to optimise their enjoyment.

The AYPPs also help give effect to the Welsh Government's national Well-being Goals. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 was not in place when the AYPPs were started but is now a key reference point. Potentially the three most relevant well-being goals are the achievement of a 'Wales of Vibrant Culture', a 'More Equal Wales', and a 'Healthier Wales'. In terms of 'ways of working' the AYPPs have the potential to take account of the long-term, to focus on prevention, and to encourage collaboration with other partners. Sport Wales' own Well-being Statement focusses on four high-level objectives, one of which concerns children and young people becoming physically active for life, and another which strives for healthier lives for all through physical activity. Overall, because of these synergies, the AYPPs can contribute directly to a wide range of public bodies' wellbeing objectives and Welsh Government's 'Prosperity for All' strategy, and to Sport Wales' new strategy.

The AYPPs are also aligned with and capable of giving effect to the specific well-being objectives of the Public Service Boards and other public bodies. But this connection has yet to be made and needs attention both by the public bodies themselves and also by Sport Wales.

Enhancing the impact of AYPPs

The impact and outcomes of the AYPPs can be further enhanced in the following ways, many of which Sport Wales already has actively in hand:

Shape and Purpose of the AYPPs: This should be strengthened and clarified by:

❖ Putting the AYPPs on a proper 3-5 year basis for funding and delivery;
❖ Restating the purpose and priorities of the AYPPs in their focus on those less likely to participate, their complementarity with school based PE, and the linkage they can provide between school and community based sport participation;
❖ Formally ending the brands of '5x60' and 'Dragon Multi-Skills and Sport' and merging them in a clearer 'AYPP' brand;
❖ Conversely, retaining and strengthening the Young Ambassador brand, and creating a development plan for it which would ideally be resourced nationally and provide a degree of national level investment in the brand;
❖ Communicating to all key stakeholders (and especially the education community and National Governing Bodies (NGBs)) the role which the AYPPs have in helping those stakeholders to deliver their own objectives;

❖ Incorporation of the AYPPs into a wider view of a holistic Wales 'sport system';

❖ Development of a stronger policy framework for the AYPPs at Welsh Government and Sport Wales and partner levels to help foster, leverage and entrenched the associated educational, health, childcare and well-being benefits of greater sport participation by young people. This could create a shared policy and strategic level understanding where opportunities to work together to develop guidelines and achieve impact can be more readily grasped; and

❖ Working closely with Welsh Government to explore opportunities to link more closely with education in particular explore the possibility of issuing a Consultation Document on sport in schools (both curriculum and extra curriculum based) with the potential to lead to statutory or non-statutory guidance under s.175 of the Education Act 2002 and/or s.88 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Operation and Delivery of the AYPPs: This can be further enhanced by:

❖ Putting more effort into identifying, sharing, and actively implementing good and best practice, and especially ‘what works?’;

❖ Ensuring that AYPPs form a key part of Sport Wales' target operating model as it implements regional approaches to sports delivery in North Wales and beyond;

❖ Incorporate the lessons of this Review into the Local Authority Partnership Agreements, having regard to the period before new regional arrangements are fully implemented nationwide;

❖ Developing (and changing) the skills and capacities of Sport Wales' Senior Officers so that they are fully equipped to guide and support local authorities in the new policy context;

❖ Applying lessons from related Sport Wales' programmes (such as the C4A Programme) to help optimise the impact of the AYPP investment;

❖ Encouraging a stronger focus on responding to the voices of children and young people in shaping the AYPPs at both national and local level;

❖ Fully applying modern techniques to the AYPPs in relation to achieving and assessing impact (and especially theory of change methodologies), accomplishing behavioural change (including nudge methods), and deploying social media and technologies;

❖ Developing an outcomes-focused measurement and evaluation framework for both national and local levels to assess the results and impacts of the AYPPs, to help key actors connect interventions and investments to specific and identifiable results; and

❖ More focussed harvesting and leveraging of the insight gained from supporting the AYPP delivery at local level to inform policy and practice. This could include an annual event for all AYPPs stakeholders to showcase good practice and its transfer, support networks between key stakeholders, report on progress, and explore emerging themes and relationships.
Sport Wales' new strategy in light of the new Vision for Sport in Wales: It is important to put the AYPPs at the heart of the new strategy:

❖ The AYPPs should be central to the objectives and outcomes to give effect to the Vision, including the positive collateral benefits which sport has for young people;
❖ The role of the AYPPs should be emphasised to leverage and optimise the use of both the natural resources assets of Wales and the leisure facilities of Wales for the benefit of young people’s enjoyment and social and physical development;
❖ Physical literacy should be the key conceptual underpinning of AYPPs within the strategy to express the breadth and purpose of physical activity as part of children's social and physical development;
❖ The relationship of the AYPPs to the role and work of the NGBs should have more weight. The AYPPs contribute new players and members at community and club level. Some NGBs are keen to widen participation, develop relationships with local authorities and schools, and optimise the role of clubs and community sport. Positive work is underway in this regard. Sport Wales has also prioritised engagement with the NGBs as part of the new regional arrangements. But this remains an important area for development;
❖ There should be more explicit connectivity of community sport and the AYPPs (including within regional approaches) to elite sport within the strategy to ensure that the potential benefits are better leveraged and understood; and
❖ In building the AYPPs into their future strategy, Sport Wales should seek actively to connect them to the Well-being Goals and objectives of the Public Services Boards and the scheduled bodies.

The AYPPs and Education: This is a key area, and the synergies can be optimised if Sport Wales and its partners are able to:

❖ Develop a clear and positive synergy between the Vision for Sport and the AYPPs with the new curriculum and its associated accountability framework;
❖ Clarify the contribution which Sport Wales can make to further development and implementation of the new curriculum including in relation to physical literacy and the education workforce skills development; and
❖ Consider developing a ‘Healthy and Active Standard’ for schools jointly with partner agencies and supporting its implementation in schools. Such a Standard could also form an important part of the accountability framework for the new curriculum.
Making the Connections

Sport and physical activity have real value to young people in and of itself, for the sheer enjoyment it can bring in its direct physical, psychological, and social benefits. The AYPPs are central to helping young people access activities which are relevant and enjoyable to them, and in helping them onto a pathway to sustained activity and benefit in later life. From a policy point of view however, it is also the collateral benefits which need to be recognised and mainstreamed. In the diagram below, we have captured some of the major connections and reinforcements which the AYPPs do already make in part and could make much more effectively.

The AYPPs are connected to leisure services, sports clubs, community provision, and schools, though in each case the connections could be strengthened – and as the diagram highlights, the notion of ‘physical literacy’ should surround and inform those connections. This is also the case in relation to the two major policy domains of health and of education, for which sport and physical activity has much to offer in achieving mainstream health and educational objectives. Finally, as we have shown, when guided and delivered with the ‘ways of working’ firmly in mind, the AYPPs are also capable of giving effect to major parts of the Vision for Sport in Wales, and of Sport Wales’ new delivery model.

Figure 3
Sport Wales’ AYPPs – Connected Policy Domains

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