

PACYP 06

Ymchwiliad i weithgarwch corfforol ymhlieth plant a phobl ifanc

Inquiry into physical activity of children and young people

Ymateb gan Marion Clark

Response from Marion Clark

Response to Inquiry into physical activity of children and young people

<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=267>

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The views given in this submission are my own and do not represent those of my employer or any other organisation.

Most of my submission is evidence about:

“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.”

1. While scanning through the review of Sport Wales referred to in the terms of reference I came across mention of “Getting Wales Moving” a joint report by Public Health Wales and Sport Wales in March 2017.

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/888/Getting%20Wales%20Moving%20V1.pdf>

This document is all about physical activity and sections of the report are directly relevant to the inquiry.

There are 6 recommendations in the Active Education section on page 20 and I wish to comment on two of them:

R1 Ensure all schools provide access to and opportunities for 120 minutes of high quality, comprehensive physical education per week, embedding the physical literacy framework within their delivery.

R5 Incorporate knowledge and understanding of physical activity across all initial teacher training.

2. 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. In some primary schools there is excellent provision with well trained enthusiastic teachers of PE. In other schools headteachers do not feel that PE is important for a wide range of reasons. Some feel that learners have lots of opportunities to be active outside school so there is no need to provide a good PE programme. Some do not think that PE is important as they are not active themselves and for whatever reason don't feel that PE provision is a priority for their school. Others would say that they don't have the facilities to provide 120 minutes and the bus is too expensive, too time consuming, etc. Another view would be that they provide plenty of after school opportunities so curriculum time doesn't matter.

3. Curriculum time physical education is very important as it is the only time when all learners will do physical activity. Providing a wonderful extra-curricular programme and promoting out of school opportunities are good things to do but they cannot take the place of a well planned and delivered curriculum programme. 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.

4. Many primary school teachers have no training whatsoever in teaching physical education. The last time I heard about learning time for PE in a primary PGCE it was a few hours. I believe that we should have specialist primary PE teachers who either teach PE throughout the whole school in a large primary school or work as peripatetic PE teachers. This model has existed in the past in Wales and still exists in Scotland.

5. Previous attempts to skill up generalist teachers have not been successful as many primary teachers are not interested. To be an effective PE teacher the person has to be active in their own life and have a wide range of interests across physical education incorporating the four parts of the current PE national curriculum: Creative activities: dance and gymnastics

Adventurous activities: swimming, orienteering, other outdoor activities

Competitive activities: games, athletics, etc

Health, fitness & wellbeing – delivered in an integrated way or as a dedicated block.

6. Excellent resources were developed to teach PE as part of the PESS Project in the areas of gymnastics, dance, health, fitness and wellbeing and other foundation phase resources. The physical literacy framework needs to be embedded in any PE delivery so new resources may be needed for this to be done well. Developing bilingual resources has been vital for our Welsh medium schools.

Our outdoor environment in Wales can be utilised to produce topic work which integrates physical activity into it. Walking routes taking in historical sites can incorporate geography with mapreading, history, physical education, language and maths if it is planned well.

7. In secondary schools a wide range of activities should be offered to learners from Year 7. The current PE national curriculum was designed to encourage schools to do this but in my experience many schools are still doing hockey, netball, football and rugby as their competitive activities. With the introduction of the new curriculum and one of the six areas of learning and experience being “Health and Wellbeing” which will include physical education or whatever it is going to called, there is an opportunity to give clear guidance on what schools should be covering. There is a task and finish group of teachers working on this headed up by someone in Welsh Government.

Many young people are not interested in “sport” and “competitive activities” although they may enjoy fitness classes, walking and other physical activities that are not traditionally considered to be part of PE. There needs to be a complete culture change in how PE is delivered and this needs to be understood by senior management in secondary schools as otherwise they will recruit in the same image thinking that they need someone with a team sport interest.

The message needs to be that good team sport players will be developed in local clubs with the coaching expertise in individual sports. The vision for physical education in school needs to be a wide range of activities which could be suggested by the young people themselves.

8. As far as I am aware the 120 minutes of PE per week is usually delivered in Years 7, 8 and most Year 9s. In Years 10 and 11 the provision drops to one session per week which headteachers will explain away as being necessary due to work for exams. Schools are being squeezed with Year 10 and Year 11 pupils needing to do the Welsh Bacc which usually means they are studying fewer subjects of their own choice at that stage. The loss of 50% of PE provision in years 10 and 11 is a question of priorities – if it was statutory they would have to do it.

In many sixth forms there is no formal provision at all although some schools do have arrangements with local facilities where learners have student rates and have the flexibility to go in their free lessons.

9. In recent years the role of advisor or advisory teacher for PE has almost completely disappeared from local authority education departments. This means there is no support for teachers in this subject. If the peripatetic PE teacher for primary schools programme is established there should be national and/or regional co-ordination to ensure parity of opportunity for learners across Wales and support for the teachers.

10. Active Travel

This is a very important part of increasing physical activity in everyday life.

Encouraging schools to actively promote this is very beneficial. However 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.

11. Sport Wales’ mantra of “Every child hooked on sport for life” is not useful as many children, young people and adults do not like sport. As discussed in the Sport Wales review document

there is confusion about the role of Sport Wales. My impression is that Sport Wales is interested in sport (as their name suggests). When I had more contact with them in my previous job they were very keen on collecting data on membership numbers in sports clubs. There are many people who are super active and are not members of any sports club. There are some members of sports clubs who are not very active. Club membership is not a useful measure of how many active people we have in Wales.

12. The “Getting Wales Moving” report gives plenty of suggestions for what action is needed. I have written mainly about schools although there is much to be done in pre-school provision – making it easy for children to be active. In Ceredigion we have run training on Developmental Movement Play and many of our pre-school settings have an area which encourages children to be active in a way chosen by them. Children need to have the environment to be physically active from birth as it is essential for brain development, amongst other things.

13. Opportunities need to be grasped to set a new culture with planning guidance encouraging a built environment which makes it easy to choose an active lifestyle. This is written about in the “Getting Wales Moving” report as is the necessity of a social marketing programme which is particularly relevant for young people – see page 25 of the report.

Looking forward to reading the results of the inquiry.

Marion Clark