

Ymchwiliad i weithgarwch corfforol ymhlith plant a phobl ifanc

Inquiry into physical activity of children and young people

Ymateb gan Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Bannau Brycheiniog

Response from Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

National Assembly for Wales Inquiry into physical activity of children and young people- evidence from Brecon Beacons National Park Authority- September 2017

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority welcome the opportunity to put forward evidence from our experience of policy and practice to support increasing levels of physical activity in children and young people.

Our evidence is focused around two of the areas of interest in the inquiry:

A. Differences in gender-based attitudes towards, and opportunities for, participation in physical activity in Wales

B. 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,

A.Differences in gender-based attitudes towards, and opportunities for, participation in physical activity in Wales

1. BBNPA are currently engaged with Cardiff University (with ESRC support) in a PhD research programme: "Gender, Health and Sustainability in using natural resources: A case study in two National Parks in Wales"
2. This PhD study aims to: i) examine the attitudes, preferences and behaviour of men and women (including young men and women) to understand how gender and social class shape the preference, usage and ownership of the natural environment and its conservation, particularly how the natural resource is being used for health and well-being outcomes, and ii) to highlight policy and practice that is influencing how the the National Park Authorities deliver health and wellbeing outcomes for different groups.
3. BBNPA has run for the last 2.5 years a Geocaching project funded by Sports Wales as part of their Calls for Action programme aiming to increase physical activity in young people . BBNPA's target in the Geocaching project has been young people with identified low levels of physical activity (identified through the Sport Wales School Sport Survey) living in areas of deprivation in Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taff. In the last 6 months the project has been granted extension funding and now also operates with participants from Neath Port Talbot and Powys. Geocaching was identified as a means to encourage physical activity amongst young people not engaged by "traditional" sports.
4. The evaluation of the Geocaching project has included both internal evaluation and research by Cardiff University CUROP programme. Some clear gender differences in

gender-based attitudes and participation in physical activity has been identified as a result as listed below. BBNPA has sought to refine the programme to address these. Eg. The Activity Leaders offer girls the chance to lead the activity early on, boosting their confidence and participation. The project supports young peoples' groups to continue Geocaching close to home and has seen high levels of replication and extension activity. The latter including young people who had not previously engaged in sport, becoming active in sports eg. Football as a result of increased physical confidence.

5. Some findings from the Cardiff University Social Sciences CUROP study of Geocaching project in 2016
 - For participants , expression was limited by language, and for girls a self conscious approach to engaging with the world
 - The safety provided by the (BBNPA) activity workers facilitated engagement, by overcoming what was unfamiliar
 - Girls were less likely than boys to have been active outdoors previously but this did not affect their engagement
 - Girls were more limited by confidence
 - Girls had less access to outdoor physical activity
 - Safety/ perceptions of safety were especially important for girls eg. This feedback: "Being housebound is quite a big thing with girls or younger women...either because they live in areas where they just not.. you know maybe there's a bit of bullying going on...some of them have told me look i don't leave the house. i don't live in a nice street. so imagine.. not feeling you can step out your front door without somebody, i'm guessing, shouting abuse or following you or whatever."(Activity leader with girls' group)

B.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

6. BBNPA has worked with the other 2 NPAs in Wales to develop and deliver a Social Inclusion and child Poverty Strategy and Action Plan, with the Plan including a range of programmes designed to address barriers identified . These barriers were identified through an initial audit in 2005 carried out by Cardiff University ("Social Inclusion Audit of the three Welsh national Parks"), and through subsequent consultations on further iterations of the Strategy and Action Plan. ,
7. Barriers identified re activity amongst children and young people identified include: Lack of knowledge and lack of family tradition to accessing green space for physical activity , lack of confidence amongst young people(including young people who are themselves parents) to use green space for physical activity , financial barriers for school visits from deprived areas to National Park and other green areas for activity, perceptual barriers about who the National Park is for, and need for specialized equipment.
8. As a result BBNPA has put in place a series of actions to address barriers. These include the programmes described below ,and targetted interventions eg

- the “Fairplay” programme (bus subsidies for education visits from schools with a high percentage of Free school Meal eligibility)
 - the Geo park Festival at May half term at Craig y Nos Country Park with a range of physical activities for young people to try.
 - Buggyise- a programme with health promotion partners in Ystradgynlais to introduce parents to simple workouts with a buggy in the Park (Craig y Nos), with young children accompanying and observing (and copying!) their parents engaging in physical activity.
9. More recently BBNPA has worked with the other NPAs to develop a Health and Wellbeing Position statement
http://npw.nationalparks.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/890797/NPW_Health_and_Well-being.pdf This includes examples of good practice, such as BBNPA’s National Park Champions programme which built skills and confidence amongst parents, carers, youth leaders and others to use greenspace (including National Parks) for physical activity.
 10. BBNPA has applied this approach consistently building skills and confidence in “trusted intermediaries” in a series of programmes including Crossing Park Boundaries, Inspiroment and Geocaching. In essence, initial training is provided (hands on in the field) in outdoor activities targetted to be suitable to the target group, to group leaders. The group leaders then return with their group and, supported by BBNPA staff, the group enjoy an activity day. The aim is to build the skills and confidence for ongoing enjoyment and physical activity in greenspace in general, using the “safe and inspiring” setting of the National Park to inspire change.
 11. Participants have consistently fed back that 2 factors in the use of National Park setting are particularly valued :i. Inspiration ; the outstanding setting of the Park makes a difference ,particularly for trying physical activities ,and ii. Safety; of feeling safe with BBNPA leaders operating to Adventurous Activity Licencing Authority standards, and being an outdoor setting where physical activity can be tried free from worries about (perceived) urban park dangers and/or observation by peers.
 12. BBNPA has in the Geocaching project in particular sought to take the extension of physical activity replication and extension a step further by actively working with young peoples’ groups closer to their home bases to set up and utilise geocaching trails .
 13. Examples of good practice: Included below are some quotes from the group leaders who have engaged with BBNPA Geocaching project, regarding the impact on their client young peoples’ physical activity:

14. Case Study Year 1 Barnardos

From arrival three of the boys were interacting well and laughing and joking. One boy remained apart and quiet, allowing others to answer for him even as the introductions were made. As the activity developed this became more obvious. The young people remarked there was no point talking to him “he doesn’t speak”. Leaders confirmed he had barely spoken in his time with them and would not participate in activities. Eventually he warmed to the activity and agreed to read a story card to the group, very quietly. Later he read another a little louder. His peers said it was the most he had spoken all year. He continued to gain in engagement and confidence throughout the activity. On the way back from the final geocache he was walking back with the other boys, fully engaged in the group. His friends shouted

'Look we've cracked him,' as he continued to laugh and joke with them on the way home. A follow up phone call 10 weeks later revealed that he was now far more engaged in the project, and that the change had occurred during the day out geocaching: "About the boy we discussed earlier. He has become engaged in several mainstream activities since taking part in geocaching – football, a local youth club and the gym. We had been struggling to get him to take part in anything before and getting very negative responses to whatever we offered." – ID, Barnardos worker.

Case Study Year 2 J.E. Miskin Project Group Leader

1. "One young person that I worked with has an online gaming addiction. Geocaching enabled me to build a bridge through common themes represented in the game (mapping) and the outside world, and to get him out and active. Generally it has helped us to build relationships between workers and young people where we have very little in common. It has been especially engaging for those young people who have very little. Generally I offer the activity and if they don't like it they never have to do it again, but they all like doing it (Geocaching) ."
2. "One lad took up geocaching as a result of it being introduced to him. He brought the activity back the care home (where he lived) and actively encouraged his peers to take up the activity. It became so popular that the entire home with 4/5 residents were all going geocaching together, including the Carers. They ended up completing the entire Cynon valley."

Case Study Year 2 H.M. Viva Girls worker

3. "The project has enabled us to run regular geocaching sessions for children and young people with a disability. It has given our members an opportunity to increase their physical activity level and enjoy a fun activity within the outdoor environment."
4. "Many of our participants have gained confidence through the geocaching sessions. They are able to work as part of a team providing support to their peers and also increased an element of educational abilities through the use of the GPS devices, identifying numbers and distance. It has increased the activity level of the participants and developed their enjoyment of an outdoor activity."

Case Study Year 2 Llamau

5. An (Over 15yrs) Homeless Male came to the project , very isolated and disengaged- his Llamau group leader said he rarely left his hostel. After the geocaching project he started engaging with his peers and taking part in walking activities.