



EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE
COMMUNITY STRATEGY FOR SPORT

Final report for Sport Wales

April 2012

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Sport Wales has big aspirations for developing the sport sector in Wales. It is driven by a vision to:

- ★ unite a proud sporting nation
- ★ get every child hooked on sport for life
- ★ establish Wales as a nation of champions

These are high aspirations and achieving them requires a step change in the delivery of sports at all levels. To help achieve this Vision, Sport Wales has already established strategies for elite sport and coaching and volunteering. To achieve step change in sport across Wales, Sport Wales recognises the need to develop sports not just at the elite level but at all levels, throughout all communities in Wales and to this end Sport Wales is developing a Community Strategy for Sport.

As a strategic document, the Community Strategy for Sport aims to provide not only aspirational direction to individuals and organisations responsible for planning and running sport in Wales, but also practical guidance on how to achieve the aspirations set out.

Brightpurpose was commissioned to undertake a stakeholder consultation exercise to explore five key priority areas that had been set out in the draft strategy. This work was supplementing wider consultation activity being undertaken by Sport Wales, who are now actively engaging with partners to explore some of the findings coming out of this research and the wider consultation.

Method

17 Focus groups were run in total, including:

- ★ 5 focus groups with club co-ordinators
- ★ 4 focus groups with people that volunteer in sport (covering a range of different volunteer roles)
- ★ 1 focus groups with Young Ambassadors
- ★ 2 focus groups with adults who play sport on a regular basis
- ★ 3 Focus groups with Local Authority representatives
- ★ 2 focus groups with representatives from education

The focus groups covered a wide geographical spread across Wales and included metropolitan, urban and rural areas.

The focus groups with club co-ordinators and volunteers were designed to explore specific topics relating to development priorities and issues facing clubs, and the motivations, experiences and support needs of volunteers in sport. The other stakeholder groups detailed above focussed on exploring the 5 key priorities set out in the draft strategy to understand issues and challenges as well as practical suggestions for enhancing community sport in relation to the priorities.

Club and volunteer feedback

The priorities reported by clubs in relation to club development covered 5 themes:

- ★ raising participation – a key priority for clubs is to continually attract new members and retain existing ones.
- ★ accessibility, affordability and quality of facilities – clubs reported that having access to suitable, affordable and high quality facilities was key in developing and sustaining their clubs.
- ★ training and development – Although clubs and volunteers recognise that training and development are essential for ensuring quality provision many feel that the expectations were too high for those involved in community sport. This can also limit the extent to which volunteers can support clubs as certain roles will require extensive training before they can carry them out.
- ★ volunteering in sports – Clubs recognise and understand the vital role that volunteers can play in terms of the running and development of a club. However, barriers to entry (such as coaching qualifications and low awareness of opportunity) the amount of time that people can or are willing to give, and clubs recruiting from a limited pool can restrict volunteer activity and opportunity
- ★ links with schools and education – having links with schools was seen as very important for many clubs, particularly in relation to raising participation and accessing facilities.

Those development priorities identified by clubs align well with the priorities set out in the draft Community Strategy for Sport

However, clubs reported challenges and issues in relation to meeting each of the development priority areas listed above. Although they recognised there was a lot of support available for clubs they reported that it was a very fragmented landscape. This meant that they often did not know who to speak to about what support and what support was available at any given time.

Feedback on the draft priorities

The table below sets out the main challenges and practical suggestions identified by stakeholders in relation to the 5 priorities detailed in the draft strategy:

Priority	Challenges/issues	Practical suggestions
Locally-defined sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ knowing what's available already in a local area ★ understanding what local communities want and need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ better monitoring of participation levels and opportunity ★ NGBs introducing different membership tiers to accommodate competitive and recreational clubs ★ supporting the NGBs with lower resource to develop clubs locally
Strong enterprising clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ increasing participation in appropriate and sustainable ways ★ the confidence and capability of club leaders to run their clubs in an enterprising way ★ mismatches between club leaders and the aspirations of younger members ★ finance e.g. for travel and equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ sharing intelligence about what works in terms of raising participation ★ more innovative fundraising ★ facilitating club collaboration ★ training that develops the capacity of coaches to develop their own clubs
The education agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ closer connections between clubs and all levels of education ★ the priority given to PE and physical literacy in schools ★ influencing a culture change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ greater involvement of HE and FE stakeholders ★ closer liaison between primary and secondary schools and FE colleges (continuity of provision) ★ sports aligning with curriculum delivery ★ wider range of 'Dragon Sports' ★ building the evidence base around physical literacy ★ securing the buy in of Welsh Government
High performing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ recruiting and retaining volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ a supported and co-ordinated approach to

workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ volunteer learning and development ★ succession planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> volunteer recruitment that goes beyond the 'usual methods' ★ harnessing those participating in sports to be future volunteers/leaders ★ Involvement of HE and FE in terms of training and development content and opportunities ★ NGBs providing mobile expert coaches providing masterclass sessions to build the capacity of club coaches ★ training and qualifications tailored to be appropriate for community sport
Facilities that are fit for purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ price/affordability ★ accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ ensuring appropriate use of facilities – are the 'right' activities/sports using the 'right space' at the right times ★ working with schools to make their facilities available ★ geographical collaboration when planning new facilities ★ increased availability and use of mobile/portable facilities

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of our research:

- ★ feedback from the various consultation groups confirms broad agreement that the areas identified as priorities within the draft strategy are the right ones
- ★ to meet the aspirations set out in the draft strategy there will need to be close collaboration between all stakeholders at a local and national level with a planned and co-ordinated approach to implementation required. Achievement of the aspirations will require the buy in and contribution of all stakeholders, with clear roles and areas of ownership. This will involve ensuring that ALL the relevant stakeholders are identified and engaged
- ★ at a local level it is going to be important that stakeholders/partners regularly communicate and consult with one another to keep abreast of what opportunities, initiatives and activities are available to support the development of community sport
- ★ in terms of demonstrating whether some of the aspirations set out in the strategy have been achieved a baseline position will need to be established. This is particularly important in respect of current participation and opportunity levels
- ★ there is a real desire from clubs to have a closer relationship with strategic partners and the things that clubs see as a priority for them align with the aspirations set out in the draft strategy. Achieving those aspirations will organically support clubs to overcome many of the barriers they currently face in relation to club sustainability and development.
- ★ clubs see the support landscape as being very fragmented and lacking a joined up approach from all stakeholders. They often don't know what support is available and who they should approach for different types of support.
- ★ all stakeholders recognised the crucial role that schools have in contributing to the development of community sports, and engaging schools in a strategic and co-ordinated manner will be vital. However, some of the aspirations set out in the priorities that require fundamental changes to teacher practice, training or the curriculum will require the buy in and leadership from the Welsh Government in order to influence and drive the changes
- ★ price/affordability and accessibility are the two fundamental aspects that will either enable or restrict club's and communities' ability to make use of facilities, and therefore has a big influence on a clubs development and sustainability.
- ★ a number of initiatives and pilots that will potentially contribute to meeting the aspirations in the draft strategy are currently underway. It is important that these pilots and initiatives, and others like them, are explored further explored to assess the potential for applicability replication across other areas and to share the findings and outcomes of these initiatives and pilots with stakeholders locally and nationally.

2 INTRODUCTION

Sport Wales has big aspirations for developing the sport sector in Wales. It is driven by a vision to:

- ★ unite a proud sporting nation
- ★ get every child hooked on sport for life
- ★ establish Wales as a nation of champions

These are high aspirations and achieving them requires a step change in the delivery of sports at all levels. To help achieve this Vision, Sport Wales has already established strategies for elite sport and coaching and volunteering. To achieve step change in sport across Wales, Sport Wales recognises the need to develop sports not just at the elite level but at all levels, throughout all communities in Wales and to this end Sport Wales is developing a Community Strategy for Sport.

As a strategic document, the Community Strategy for Sport aims to provide not only aspirational direction to individuals and organisations responsible for planning and running sport in Wales, but also practical guidance on how to achieve the aspirations set out. The strategy, when finalised, aims to increase participation, improve sporting performance and to raise standards in sport by highlighting the challenges in developing community sports and the practical approaches and conditions necessary to deliver achieve this.

At the time of the research the draft strategy set out five key priority areas. These key priority areas had been identified by Sport Wales in conjunction with key partners and stakeholders. They were:

1. Locally-Defined Sports
2. Strong Enterprising Clubs
3. The Education Agenda
4. High Performing Workforce
5. Facilities that are Fit for Purpose¹

The need for consultation with a wide cross section of stakeholders that will contribute to, or be influenced by, the strategy was seen as critical by Sport Wales. As such, to supplement other formal consultation activity being undertaken by Sport Wales Brightpurpose was appointed to:

- ★ conduct a series of focus groups with individuals involved in delivering and supporting community sport
- ★ understand the issues stakeholders face in running and developing community sport
- ★ gather feedback on the priorities and expectations set out in the draft strategy
- ★ identify gaps and challenges within the identified priorities
- ★ provide evidence to ensure priorities align with the needs of stakeholders in community sports

It is important to note that at the time this research took place the strategy was still a working draft, with the views being sought through this research and other consultation activity being used to inform the development of the final version of the strategy. Sport Wales are continuing to engage with partners to explore some of the findings coming out of the consultation activity and discuss partner views, ideas and current activities.

This report sets out the findings of our research.

1 As a result of consultation with partners, the wording of these priority areas has since been revised to: Thriving Clubs, Local Decisions, Quality Education, Committed Workforce and Appropriate Facilities.

3 METHODOLOGY



3.1 Project set up

The research project started with an inception meeting between the Brightpurpose team and Sport Wales staff in January 2012. The inception meeting was used to agree clear objectives for the project, consultation methods to be used, consultation groups to be engaged, and project delivery and reporting timescales.

The inception meeting was followed by a review of relevant documents, including the draft Community Strategy for Sport. The research framework was developed following the review, and included:

- ★ reviewing contact details from the Active Adults survey to identify volunteers and regular sports participants
- ★ working closely with National Governing bodies (NGBs) for 16 different sports to identify potential clubs to be included in the research
- ★ working with Sport Wales to identify stakeholders in Local Authorities and education
- ★ sampling and segmentation of potential focus group participants
- ★ finalising focus group locations
- ★ designing focus groups discussion guides
- ★ designing short paper 'companion' surveys to be completed by focus group participants
- ★ designing resources, such as posters to be used in the focus groups

A key part of this phase was identifying focus group participants. This required collecting and developing a database of club contact details, working closely with National Governing Bodies (NGBs) for a range of different sports. This process highlighted the fragmented nature in which data is collected and presented, with some NGBs holding extensive records of the clubs they represent and others having minimal data, and each dataset being presented in a different format. Whilst this proved time-consuming when developing a contact database for club representatives, it ultimately allowed the Brightpurpose team to contact a wide range of clubs across Wales. Data collected from the Active Adults survey was also used; to identify suitable focus group participants which supplemented the data collected from NGBs.

Focus group participants were mapped by postcode to identify areas – rural, urban, and metropolitan – where there were clusters of clubs, volunteers or participants. This approach was used to select the locations for delivering focus groups with these stakeholder groups, and deliver the highest possible participation rates. This approach made it possible to identify where there were large clusters of clubs, participants, or volunteers located in Communities First areas, allowing us to identify 2 locations where a high number of individuals from, or attending clubs in, Communities First areas could be engaged.

After identifying the areas in which focus groups were to be delivered, our administrative team began contacting sports participants, volunteers and club representatives by telephone and e-mail to raise awareness of the research and identify participants for the focus groups.

Additional focus groups with Young Ambassadors, Local Authority representatives and education representatives were carried out, with Sport Wales staff identifying the stakeholders in each consultation group. An in-depth telephone interview was carried out with a representative of The Federation of Disability Sport Wales, to explore how the strategy priorities aligned with the federation's members' priorities and experiences.

3.2 Fieldwork

17 Focus groups were run in total, including:

- ★ 5 focus groups with club co-ordinators
- ★ 4 focus groups with volunteers
- ★ 1 focus groups with Young Ambassadors
- ★ 2 focus groups with adults who play sport on a regular basis (active adults)
- ★ 3 Focus groups with Local Authority representatives
- ★ 2 focus groups with representatives from education

A detailed breakdown of the location, timing, and attendance of the focus groups delivered is shown below:

Consultation Group	Date	Time	County	Town	Area Type	Attendance
Active Adults	01/03/2012	18:30-20:00	Neath Port Talbot	Port Talbot	Urban	3
	05/03/2012	18:30-20:00	Pembrokeshire	Pembroke	Rural	11
Club representatives	22/02/2012	18:30-20:00	Rhondda Cynon Taff	Pontypridd	Urban	3
	23/02/2012	18:30-20:00	Cardiff	Cardiff	Metropolitan	5
	27/02/2012	18:30-20:00	Wrexham	Wrexham	Metropolitan	8
	28/02/2012	18:30-20:00	Torfaen	Cwmbran	Rural	3
	28/02/2012	18:30-20:00	Conwy	Conwy	Rural	16
Disability Sports (Telephone Int)						
Education	01/03/2012	14:00-16:00	Conwy			1
	06/03/2012		Conwy			3
Local Authority Reps	23/02/2012		Cardiff			9
	07/03/2012		Denbighshire			7
	08/03/2012		Carmarthen			10
Volunteers	27/02/2012	18:30-20:00	Newport	Newport	Metropolitan	1
	29/02/2012	18:30-20:00	Conwy	Conwy	Rural	4
	29/02/2012	18:30-20:00	Merthyr Tydfil	Merthyr Tydfil	Urban	3
	01/03/2012	18:30-20:00	Isle of Anglesey	Menai Bridge	Rural	7
Young Ambassadors	17/02/2012	11.00-12.30	Cardiff	Cardiff	Metropolitan	12

While the target for attendance at focus groups was between 4 and 6 participants, fewer turned up to a small number of focus groups, where 10 or more had initially acknowledged they would attend. This highlights the high drop-out rate amongst this audience – particularly volunteers and active adults.

Club representatives and volunteers came from a range of sports, from 'mainstream' sports to 'niche' sports. These included volunteers and coaches for clubs in:

- ★ Athletics
- ★ Bowling
- ★ Canoe polo
- ★ Cricket
- ★ Cycling
- ★ Football
- ★ Golf
- ★ Gymnastics
- ★ Hockey
- ★ Kayaking
- ★ Korfball
- ★ Netball
- ★ Rugby league
- ★ Rugby union
- ★ Sailing
- ★ Triathlon

3.3 Analysis and Reporting

Following the fieldwork stage the evaluation team met for an analysis workshop to explore common themes and also particular themes highlighted by a specific consultation group or from a specific geographic area.

Following the analysis phase the draft final report was produced. Between submission of the draft and final report further fieldwork was conducted. This involved carrying out 5 telephone interviews with identified stakeholders that could not attend the focus groups.

Following completion of the further fieldwork and feedback on the draft report from Sport Wales the report was finalised.

4 UNDERSTANDING ISSUES FACING SPORTS CLUBS AND VOLUNTEERS

This section reports findings from consultation with volunteers and club representatives. We explored different themes with volunteer and club representative consultation groups, however there was a large overlap between these groups with many club representatives also seeing themselves as volunteers and attending volunteer focus groups.

Where feedback was specific to a particular sport, consultation group or geography we have made this distinction.

4.1 Key priorities for developing clubs

The priorities identified in the draft Community Strategy for Sport largely align with the priorities of club representatives and volunteers:

- ★ Raising participation
- ★ Accessibility, affordability and quality of facilities
- ★ Training and development
- ★ Volunteering in sports
- ★ Links with schools and education

Underpinning all of these priorities, club representatives and volunteers emphasised the need for support and consultation. Most clubs utilised some kind of funding support from strategic partners to maintain the club, and many relied on local authorities for facilities and equipment, with NGBs and Sports Wales approached for training and funding to support development. Despite the extent to which clubs rely on this support, few have well established links with these organisations and few clubs felt that the local authorities had a clear picture in terms of the local provision and what the clubs needed in order to continue and thrive. There is significant demand from clubs for greater communication and consultation between clubs and strategic partners and getting this right is seen as a critical step in developing community sport.

The sections below provide greater detail regarding the challenges which clubs face, the support they feel they need to improve clubs, and the practical suggestions they have for improving clubs and sports at the community level.

4.2 Support for clubs

Club representatives indicated that although there may be a wide range of support available, it is often difficult to know where to go, or who to approach to access support. Some clubs had good links with NGBs, others with their Local Authorities, and many had accessed funding support from Sport Wales' Community Chest funding.

Some clubs had negative experiences of engaging with support from strategic partners. One of the most cited complaints about this was a lack of follow up communication. Some club representatives indicated they had contacted local leisure centres or local authority contacts, asking questions about what funding was available, or where to get support, but received no reply, or a reply that wasn't helpful. This emphasises the need for good communication with clubs, to raise awareness of what and where support is available and to help clubs to access it.

“We need more local authority support for clubs – particularly for developing appropriate training facilities”

In most cases club representatives indicated that they had approached their local authority or NGB rather than the other way round. Feedback widely suggested that more proactive support from Local Authorities and NGBs would be valuable in supporting clubs – highlighting the need for greater communication and consultation with community clubs.

“We need more active involvement of governing bodies and local authorities”

“We need more support from NGBs, Local Authorities, and educational organisations”

To this end many club representatives wanted to see more sport development officers, and wanted to see more of a presence from these individuals – seeing them actually coming in to visit their clubs, picking up the phone to talk to clubs about developments and funding they might be interested in, and generally communicating more effectively with them to understand the challenges that clubs face and help them move forward. This proactive approach from strategic stakeholders is important in giving clubs leadership – especially those who are struggling most.

One club leader commented that their governing body had paid a visit to one of their sessions, arriving unannounced and asking parents lots of questions about the club. To build a supportive relationship, it would be beneficial if the governing bodies discuss visits with the clubs or let them know that from time to time they may visit the club to review how it runs.

Funding support was crucial to most clubs, and many indicated that without additional funding they would not be able to sustain the club. Community Chest grants are extremely important in this regard, and support many clubs to purchase the equipment and training they need to survive.

Some clubs recognised that funding was stretched across many sports in Wales, and club representatives indicated that they felt there needed to be an increased recognition of the importance of sport and increased budgets to support development at national and regional levels.

4.3 Participation

Club representatives reported that one of their main priorities is to continually attract and retain members. They told us that to attract younger members the parents have to be on board and prepared to commit their support by providing transport, time and covering the cost of participating. As the members get older, those who are high achievers tend to move on to more successful clubs or move away when they go to university or college. This emphasises the need to engage children at a young age and to build links with schools. The need

for buy-in from parents also emphasises the importance of appealing to families as a means of engaging both juniors and seniors.

“ A key challenge for our club is developing young people to come in supported by their families. Parents need to understand what is required of their children. ”

For some clubs and sports there have been significant challenges in engaging males in sports that are perceived as 'girls' sport' (e.g. hockey and netball) and vice versa. This can be a significant barrier to generating interest in the sport at an early age and make it difficult to widen participation. To tackle this there is a need to change the way in which these sports are portrayed to be more inclusive – for example, introducing these sports to both males and females in schools to ensure that they are not viewed as gender specific sports.

“ Encouraging girls' football and other male dominated sports at a primary level and then carrying it over to secondary is important ”

“ female sport gets a very low profile by councils and the press ”

For increasing participation amongst children from deprived areas, some club representatives indicated it would be extremely useful to subsidise costs. Some clubs do this themselves, raising subsidies through fundraising activities, however others have suggested this is hard to achieve due to costs for other resources such as training, equipment, and facilities.

“ we would like money available to continue with sport education and to be able to subsidise the cost of sessions for those underprivileged children, whereas, at the moment the club has to fundraise to keep costs low ”

Some club representatives indicated that they felt their sports had challenges in engaging participants because they were not widely publicised or did not have a high enough profile in the sports agenda. This was particularly true for smaller 'niche' sports, e.g. sailing.

“People don't know the reservoir exists never mind what sailing has to offer”

For other sports, such as netball, hockey, and rugby league, many clubs felt their sport was under-recognised despite having a broad base of participants. To help this, club representatives felt there could be wider reporting of competitions from a broader range of sports in the media. Achieving this would require significant support from strategic stakeholders in the sports sector and many club representatives felt that they were similarly under-represented and under-supported by partners in the sports and education sectors.

“I would like to see money given and distributed fairly between sports”

Other sports, such as golf and sailing, felt they faced a challenge in terms of image – where they were seen as expensive and exclusive, despite the effort of clubs to make them as inclusive and affordable as possible. For these clubs, support to change the image of the sport, making it more inclusive would help broaden and increase participation.

“Change the profile of golf to 'open to all'”

One way in which some clubs felt it was possible to publicise sports and increase participation was to develop high profile media campaigns using a recognised sports person. This was seen to have had a big impact in cycling in the Cardiff area, and some clubs felt it could work for their sport by getting 'big names' into communities and schools and building enthusiasm for sports.

4.4 Volunteering

4.4.1 Engaging parents

Clubs do not tend to advertise for volunteers but rely on people they know. The most common method junior clubs use to attract volunteers is to talk to the parents or family members of participants.

“Getting families involved in the club is important so that it can be a fun day out for everyone”

Some clubs and volunteers indicated that parents broadly fell into two categories:

- ★ enthusiastic parents
- ★ disengaged parents

Club representatives indicated that enthusiastic parents were easier to engage in volunteering. As their child is attending they may already have an interest in the club and can be persuaded to take on a small role. Often all

that was required of clubs to engage these parents was to ask them. As one volunteer put it, 'Just ask'. The club may then ask them to take on additional duties, expanding their volunteering role, where the parent shows an interest or a capability and where the club has a need for support.

Some clubs had developed formal processes for engaging parents, such as asking them to give details about their profession or what skills they could bring to the club, when they were signing their children up to participate. Some clubs felt this was a good way of getting the right people with the right skills to take on particular roles in clubs – for example, engaging a parent who worked as an accountant in the treasurer role. Other clubs took a less formal approach which involved asking parents where they could help out, or asking them to do specific tasks, such as helping out with transport or washing the kit after a game.

Clubs reported that disengaged parents were much harder to engage in volunteering, as many of these parents simply drop off their child and leave. Some club representatives indicated they felt their clubs were treated as a 'crèche' or 'babysitting' service.

Some clubs had taken specific measures to prevent this from happening, such as ensuring that parents were available to supervise their children while they were playing sports and some club representatives indicated this had proved successful in getting parents to see their children engaged in activities, and using that to get parents interested in the sport and in the club. Some club representatives indicated that they were wary of this approach however as they didn't want to prevent young people from participating where a parent didn't have the time to supervise.

Engaging parents in running the club, coaching, and even spectating needs to be managed carefully, and some individuals do not show the reliability necessary for volunteering. Some comments indicated that trying to engage parents had led to 'interfering' and challenging decisions about team selection or refereeing decisions, which were not constructive towards club development. While there is a need for clubs to be open to new opinions and ideas, these should be constructive, and some clubs gave examples of parents who were problematic, such as parents becoming aggressive towards other parents and in one case a parent assaulting a child football player. In one area, parents are banned from watching games to avoid this. This indicates that the reliability and quality of volunteers are often more important than the volume of volunteers the club has. Many clubs expressed the view that getting the right volunteers – those who were passionate and would support development – was most important.

4.4.2 Other volunteer recruitment methods and issues

Focus group participants also suggested a number of other ways to increase the number of volunteers. One suggestion was to develop a brokerage service to link up people who wish to volunteer with clubs looking for volunteers. This could build upon any existing brokerage services, such as those offered by Volunteering Wales. It is important that individuals know where to look to find out about what volunteering opportunities are available, so raising awareness of such a resource would be important. Similarly, clubs would need to know that it was available as a resource and be linked to it.

 We should be developing links with those who may want to volunteer – through volunteer centres, schools, job centres 

Other suggestions for increasing the pool of volunteers in sports included developing programmes with JobCentre Plus and partners in education to ensure that young people, and people looking to gain experience, get the opportunity to volunteer. This should not push individuals into volunteering in sports, but make them aware of the opportunity for them to develop their skills and gain experience by supporting clubs in the

community. For example, it was suggested that students studying sports related courses could be tasked with volunteering for a local club as part of their coursework.

Many club representatives indicated that a key challenge in developing volunteering is around getting participants and parents to understand the cost and amount of planning and effort it takes to run a club. Many participants simply come, pay, participate, and leave – without consideration of the volunteering required to deliver the club they participate in.

“We need participants to understand the amount of effort it takes to ‘run a club’: Finance and labour”

Some clubs suggested that a mentoring process, where regular participants are asked to take on small roles in the running, development and maintenance of the club, supported by someone senior can impact upon volunteer participation rates. This can have a significant impact on raising participants' awareness of what is required to run a club. Over a period of time participants become confident in volunteering in this role, and can take on new responsibilities, thereby widening the volunteer pool. In addition, this splits the burden of volunteering over a greater number of individuals, requiring just a little time from many volunteers, rather than asking extensive amounts of time from a dedicated few. As discussed in the previous section though, it would still require getting the 'right' people involved, not just sheer volume.

This structure can also be used to plan succession for key roles within the club. For example, where a president, treasurer, or key other volunteer, leaves the club with little notice, if the club has a number of participants supporting this role then these participants will have developed the knowledge and understanding to take on this role. One challenge with this model is to ensure that regular participants are not given a volunteering role they do not want, which may cause them to disengage with the club and maybe even the sport. This is part of a process which should encourage individuals to have buy-in into the club, allowing them to have a say in how the club develops. Clubs emphasised that having an open mind to ideas from new volunteers is important to getting their buy-in and can often result in valuable learning and experiences for the club.

Another suggestion for developing volunteering at clubs is to increase the social aspect of the club, to ensure that participation goes beyond just training sessions. This can be important in bringing members together, and allowing them to discuss club development issues in an informal environment. Generating a good social atmosphere can also help to ensure that the sport is fun and participants are more likely to stay engaged.

Some club representatives indicated that it was important to engage volunteers who were passionate about sport and about supporting the club as these were the highest quality volunteers who contributed the most to the club, even if they didn't participate in the sport themselves.

“Coaching is quite technical so frightens people if they haven't played the sport themselves. This shouldn't necessarily matter. They need to understand the sport, appreciate it but not necessarily play.”

The motivation for volunteering varied between people that wanted to play the sport themselves but 'weren't good enough' so they enjoyed being part of the club in other ways to having a close circle of friends. For some there was a sense of achievement and for others they volunteered because it was fun. Some volunteers suggested that when recruiting others, it is important to talk to them about what they can get out of the experience.

4.4.3 Training and development

A key challenge for developing volunteers is in delivering training. It is often a requirement that volunteers have formal qualifications in coaching before they are allowed to coach participants. However, access to this training was seen to be prohibitively expensive for volunteers on their own. Across different sports, access to level 1 and 2 coaching were in greatest demand from clubs, but prices for training varied widely from sport to sport, with some sports such as gymnastics, indicating training was particularly expensive. Club representatives and volunteers also thought it was important that funding for coaching training is available to minimise barriers to entry.

“To become a coach of anything it costs too much and clubs cannot afford it.”

Most clubs supported volunteers to take up these training opportunities, with funding to do so often coming from Community Chest grants although this is dependent on the clubs being aware that this funding is available and how to apply for it. Many clubs didn't feel they had enough resources to train a sufficient number of volunteers, and some clubs reported that they took a risk in training volunteers, as volunteers could sometimes leave the club following training.

Some clubs felt the level of expectation for training and developing was too high, particularly where volunteers were expected to give up time and money to complete these. Feedback suggested that the level of expectation might put some potential volunteers off, preventing them from getting involved.

Volunteers indicated that they were limited in the extent to which they could help clubs without going through extensive training and health and safety checks. For example, many volunteers would like to coach, but can't do so until they have:

- ★ Secured at least a level 1 coaching qualification
- ★ Completed a course in safeguarding and child protection
- ★ Completed first aid courses
- ★ Completed CRB checks

CRB checks were seen as particularly bureaucratic, and some clubs questioned their effectiveness in safeguarding children. The requirement for multiple CRB checks across different sports was widely disliked, as it was viewed as duplication – a complete waste of volunteers' time. Clubs suggested that there should be only one CRB check necessary, transferrable across clubs and sports. Some club representatives indicated that parents didn't want to get involved because they felt CRB checks were intrusive and off-putting. In addition, some club representatives indicated they felt CRB checks contributed towards a stigma in relation to the sport, where everyone was 'on guard' when working with children. Some clubs felt that this was a preposterous situation, and that adults should feel at ease working with children and there was a need to address this awkwardness and encourage volunteers to feel at ease when working with children.

Training is not usually provided for roles such as Club Secretary or Treasurer as the clubs tend to select people for the roles that have the required skills and experience.

4.4.4 Challenges for volunteers

One club indicated that many of its volunteers were not employed and that there were concerns that more people who were not in work were not volunteering because they feared they would lose their benefits. There was a feeling that individuals should not be punished for volunteering, and that there needs to be greater awareness around volunteering and claiming benefits.

Volunteers that do work reported finding it challenging to make time to fit in their volunteering duties on top of work and family commitments. One volunteer who works for the Welsh Government is granted special leave to attend competitions for the Cricket Club where he umpires. For those volunteers where time to fit in their volunteering is limited, organisations could give employees time to do this as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility policies. It is also important to ensure volunteers understand where they are supported by their employers.

4.4.5 Supporting volunteers

Most focus group members found it difficult to identify the support they received from the club but said that if there was a problem they didn't know how to deal with, they would know who to go to for help. Clubs can cover volunteer travel and expenses to ensure that volunteers are never out of pocket for giving up their time. This funding can be supported through Community Chest grants.

Recognition is an important part of volunteering. While many volunteers do so out of good will, and expect no reward or recompense, it is considered good practice to acknowledge volunteers and the contribution they are making. Some clubs have developed a formal process for recognising and rewarding volunteers, such as the 'volunteer of the year' award. These need not be expensive for clubs, but help to show that volunteers are valued, and encourages their continued buy-in and support.

4.5 Using technology

Club representatives indicated that technology was increasingly important in raising awareness of clubs, and many had invested in developing Twitter feeds, Facebook pages and other social networking tools to engage members and potential participants. Some clubs had developed their own websites and indicated that this was a valuable resource for raising awareness, however, it was also indicated that this could be challenging to develop and maintain and often required large amounts of time from volunteers with web-development skills to drive it.

Many club representatives indicated that an online presence was important and that being able to find out what clubs were doing in a specific area would be a useful tool for helping engagement. Current online directories often hold details of some clubs, but not others within a certain sport or area, and few club representatives indicated that they were aware of who to work with or what had to be done to get their club details on directories. This function would be greatly supported by sports development officers in local authorities and NGBs working with clubs to create better databases of club information and contacts. It is important for these databases of clubs to be coordinated – ideally with a central database of club contacts which can show clubs by local level, by sport, etc. This would also be a useful tool for increasing communication and collaboration between clubs and facilitating consultation between strategic partners in the sports sector and clubs.

4.6 Links with schools

Having links with schools was seen as very important for many clubs, particularly in relation to raising participation and accessing facilities.

Club representatives indicated that it would be good to have coaches from community clubs going into schools to deliver a number of sessions in their sport to get children interested in the sport, as well as interested in participating in the club. Some club representatives indicated that they felt this was an area where local authorities and NGBs should be supporting them. This is happening in Cricket, where the NGB has identified officers to help clubs to work with schools, however feedback suggests this needs to be a structured approach delivered across all sports.

“It’s a priority that we are making excellent links with school whereby a coach can go into a school to give a number of sessions to get younger players interested”

Some clubs reported that it was challenging to engage with schools, and some reported that they hadn't benefited greatly from being able to go into coach at schools. Some felt they simply delivered sessions in a school environment, but this did not necessarily translate into increased participation at the club level.

“Clubs generally go into schools and deliver coaching sessions, but it’s hard to get young people to come out to clubs, to give up time, to get transport and to pay”

Some club representatives indicated that they felt schools needed more support to help engage young people in sport. As there is no academic incentive or achievement for participating in specific sports, this limits the extent to which schools are motivated to encourage participation. Essentially, schools and PE teachers are not measured against extra-curricular engagement in sport. This is a challenging area, as schools can't just be given more funding as this doesn't necessarily mean it will be channelled into sports and developing links with clubs.

Some clubs did report that they had worked with 5x60 officers who had helped them develop links with the school, have coaching opportunities in the school, and generated volunteers and participants. However, most representatives indicated their club had not engaged with 5x60 officers, suggesting that there is still scope for widening community engagement from schools.

Transport is another big challenge in generating links between clubs and schools. It is often difficult for young people to get from schools to community clubs as they have to pay for their transport or rely on parents. This can mean that even when clubs invest time by going into schools and delivering sessions with young people, this may not result in increased participation at the club if the young people cannot easily get to club training grounds. As young people are often dependent on their parents for transport, this highlights the importance of clubs gaining support from parents.

4.7 Links with HE and FE

Many community clubs find it challenging to engage participants from universities and colleges, and in some clubs there is a reluctance to engage these participants due to their high turnover. Some clubs have been able to recruit from universities and colleges by attending the sports fair during fresher's weeks to raise awareness of the club.

Another challenge to engaging with universities and colleges is that the FE and HE sector often have their own teams. In this regard they are like competitor clubs, which operate in different leagues. This can make it hard for clubs to recruit from university students.

Finally, a number of community club representatives feel that clubs lose a lot of young players when they move on to college and university. This can require that they move away, or it can have a big impact on their time commitments, both of which can prevent them from participating in community clubs.

There may be opportunities to link with students in courses studying sports related subjects where their contribution to a local sports club could be instigated through college or university or even recognised as part of their learning.

4.8 Links with other clubs and centres of excellence

Clubs told us that it is challenging for them to develop links with other clubs when they are competing with them. For many there is also a geographic divide which limits the extent to which they can cooperate. Much of the cooperation can be around developing events and competitive opportunities. Clubs could also join up on training courses to gain economies of scale.

Club representatives indicated that developing links with professional clubs and centres of excellence can be rewarding and can be an excellent way of creating a structured progression route for talented individuals.

Some club representatives indicated that there needs to be better links between junior and senior clubs as this was a big area for participants to disengage. Some club representatives indicated that at ages 16-18 many young people disengage because they become more engaged in socialising outside of sports. This was particularly true where there was a gap in delivery, as one club representative indicated there was a lack of provision for footballers from 16 until they were 18.

4.9 Talent identification and development

For most clubs talent identification and development was not a challenge. Club coaches were easily able to identify talented individuals, and many had links with scouts, or linked with regional centres for excellence and had established systems for referring talented individuals on to regional centres. Some clubs did indicate that they felt the selection processes for regional centres and national teams could be improved to be more representative of players' abilities and potential. For example, one club representative indicated that they were aware of a very talented young person who hadn't achieved a place at a regional centre, where someone less skilled but older and stronger had been selected. This highlights the subjective nature of talent identification and the challenges in making sure this process is as fair as possible.

One challenge clubs faced when developing talent was that this often led to their best players leaving to go to centres of excellence, or to more well-known clubs. Many clubs accepted this as the nature of the talent development process, but some representatives felt this was a systematic challenge which prevented community clubs seeing the benefits of talented players that they had invested in.

“the elite system in sailing takes youngsters away from our clubs”

“higher level clubs poach people and there is little we can do about it”

One key challenge regarding talent development was cost. Many clubs were able to provide stories of the extreme costs that were required to support young athletes performing at an elite level. There was a feeling that for many individuals this was prohibitively expensive and this cost could actually prevent young people from engaging at the top level. It was also reported that strong backing from parents is also required, with many parents having to pay thousands of pounds each year to support their children to travel, to access training, and to buy the equipment they need to perform at the highest level. One club representative suggested that under the current model, it becomes more expensive to participate in sport the more elite players become, and felt that this should be reversed to make it cheaper for elite athletes, to encourage participants to reach their potential. It was however recognised that the number of hours of training and coaching required to develop elite athletes is significant, and that clubs and organisations doing this are making a considerable investment in individuals, which must be funded.

4.10 Facilities

Providing suitable facilities is a key priority for clubs. Club representatives indicated four main areas which were important in ensuring facilities were suitable:

- ★ accessibility
- ★ cost
- ★ quality, ground-keeping and maintenance
- ★ consultation and communication

For those clubs that have their own facilities, generating funds is the main challenge. Clubs with their own grounds reported a number of different ways in which they paid for these facilities, including membership fees, fundraising activities and grants and other funding support. A number of club representatives indicated frustration that funding, e.g. through community chest, was not available for facilities. This was seen as a gap whereby many clubs couldn't afford to install facilities which were often needed for competitive matches, such as installing changing room facilities.

For those that use local authority sports facilities, competing for those facilities against other clubs is a challenge. This seemed a particular challenge for netball clubs. Some clubs reported that accessing facilities was extremely challenging, especially where they needed specific equipment or high quality facilities to support competitive matches. For some clubs it was extremely challenging to schedule regular training schedules due to:

- ★ costs
- ★ priority bookings for other sports
- ★ levels of demand

One netball club had a waiting list for people who wanted to play, but at the moment they couldn't secure courts at the local leisure centre due to high demand in that area.

“We need more netball courts. We have a waiting list of people who want to play and can't”

The pricing of courts, pitches, and other facilities were often prohibitively expensive for some clubs, limiting their activity in the community. Some club representatives reported that leisure facilities were so expensive that they could only afford to pay for them once every second week and others reported that if prices increased they felt it would be unsustainable for the club. This is not uniform across all clubs and tended to be reported by sports that require access to the type of facility offered by leisure centres (eg hockey, netball, football and Korfbal), but highlights the challenges faced by some, and emphasises the need for pricing to be appropriate to allow participation. This is especially true for engaging individuals from deprived areas. It is suggested that clubs could be charged a reduced rate by local authorities owned sports and leisure facilities to help this situation, especially where they bring regular participation.

Some club representatives also reported that they faced significant challenges to booking facilities, because leisure centres gave priority to certain age groups (particularly young people) and sports. Examples given included a netball club which could not access courts in the evenings because priority was given to badminton. Another example came from hockey clubs which could not access pitches because priority was given to junior teams and football teams – even in the late evening. Representatives from these hockey clubs indicated that they couldn't book facilities in the evening because the operator was not only offering priority to young people, but also giving them the pitches at highly discounted rates which they felt was unsustainable. Many sports were often competing for use of the same facilities. Club representatives indicated badminton, indoor football and netball clubs often competed for courts and football and hockey clubs often competed for use of pitches. For sports which required very specific facilities, such as kayaking, cricket, rugby and sailing, club coordinators did not indicate challenges in securing facilities caused by competition from other sports.

“A number of astroturfs are designated to football and hockey is not given priority”

“Facilities need to be both available AND affordable”

The challenges in accessing pitches emphasises the need for consultation and communication between clubs and local authorities, or other operators of facilities, to allow clubs to access courts at appropriate times. An example of this might be in prioritising earlier evening classes for young people, while allowing adult classes priority later in the evening – however, it is important that this process is as flexible as possible to facilitate for the circumstances of the widest range of clubs. Some clubs were also frustrated because they could not book in blocks, despite their ability to continuously bring large numbers of participants.

Many club representatives indicated that it was important that school facilities were utilised in the evenings. For some areas, such as Conwy, this was already being done. For other areas, such as Wrexham, this was problematic, and schools were not opening their facilities in the evenings, often due to the costs and staffing required. In some areas this problem is avoided as the school itself does not run the premises in the evenings; this is done instead by the local authority. Another suggestion was that community clubs or groups could manage school facilities themselves in the evenings.

“school sports facilities should be open to clubs but they are ruled by janitors”

One challenge to using school facilities which was noted by clubs was that they are unavailable for a number of weeks during the summer when students are sitting their exams. This can also have a knock-on effect with participation, where young people disengage at this stage and don't come back until after the summer holidays.

It is suggested that when facilities are being developed, that the local sports community is consulted to ensure that leisure centres and sports facilities represent the needs of the community. Most clubs reported that they had not been engaged in consultation and many reported that facilities in their area had been developed which did not suit the needs of the community. Some clubs were able to give specific examples of new facilities which had been developed, but went unused, because they did not fit with the demands from the community. This means that planners should not simply identify the need for generic 'sports facilities' but must consult widely to understand what sports clubs and participants want from facilities.

“the problem with local authorities is that they don't engage with clubs. If they are building facilities they should consult with users and clubs”

Many clubs also indicated that the maintenance and ground-keeping of facilities were an important priority. For many clubs this was a costly exercise, and support from local authority and partners was extremely welcome in this area. Some clubs gave examples of new facilities which had been developed, but not maintained, which had subsequently fallen into a state of disrepair and now went unused.

Finally, some club representatives indicated that they felt there was a disparity between facilities in the North and in the South. Many representatives in North Wales indicated they felt that South Wales had more facilities and often had higher standards of facilities – particularly in populated areas such as Cardiff. This north-south divide also meant that it was difficult for many community clubs to compete more widely and get support from volunteers, as it often meant travelling for a whole day to participate in a competitive match. Some representatives acknowledged that a disparity in facilities may be due to population densities, with more, and a greater range of facilities being available to serve a larger population. This divide does however emphasise the need for open and fair allocation of facilities across Wales.

5 FEEDBACK ON DRAFT STRATEGY PRIORITIES

This section includes feedback from:

- ★ Those that participate in sport regularly
- ★ Local authority representatives
- ★ Education representatives
- ★ Young Ambassadors
- ★ Representative from the Federation of Disability Sports

Focus groups with these audiences explored the 5 priority areas that were set out in the draft strategy:

- 1 Locally-Defined Sports
- 2 Strong Enterprising Clubs
- 3 The Education Agenda
- 4 High Performing Workforce
- 5 Facilities that are Fit for Purpose

Discussions with each stakeholder audience covered all five of these priorities and focussed on understanding:

- ★ the extent to which stakeholders agreed with the priority areas identified
- ★ the challenges associated with delivering priorities
- ★ what could be done to overcoming challenges and develop community sports
- ★ what support, resources and conditions are required to facilitate development
- ★ areas requiring special attention
- ★ any priorities not addressed in the strategy

In addition to the consultation feedback on the draft priorities, which this report presents, a number of comments on the wider draft strategy issued by Sport Wales to Stakeholders were also captured. This provides important context for the feedback provided from stakeholders in education and local authorities. Sections 5.1 to 5.5 below present some of the wider comments around structuring and delivering the Community Strategy for Sport. It is important to note that these comments were not voiced by all local authority and education stakeholders but were raised consistently by a significant minority at each focus group.

5.1 Initial response to the draft strategy

The responses across the different groups showed that there was widespread agreement with the aspirations set out in the strategy, with no significant gaps. Rather than gaps, feedback from some local authority representatives and stakeholders in education suggested that the strategy contained too much, was unfocussed and impractical for practitioners. Amongst those in Local Authorities and education who had the opportunity to read the strategy, there was some concern that the strategy's length meant that it wouldn't be read.

There was also some concern from Local Authorities about how wide-reaching the strategy is and how 'sport' is defined – e.g. does this include fitness and exercise activities or is it limited to competitive activities like football, rugby, golf, etc. There was a lack of clarity regarding the role of Sport Wales, as well as a lack of clarity of what activities are covered in the strategy.

5.2 Strategy or action plan?

Stakeholders were also left confused and asking whether it is a strategy, a guide, or an action plan – or is it all three? Stakeholders want clarity and at present they are unsure as to what they are supposed to do with it,

and how to use it, and how it is supposed to align with local strategies and priorities. Further to this, they also wondered how it would align or inform Local Authority Partnership Agreements (LAPA).

One local authority group also asked whether a national community strategy was a contradiction in terms and whether this national level strategy could be broken down into regional strategies.

5.3 Recognition of what is already being done

It is also worth highlighting that a number of stakeholders reported feeling patronised by the draft strategy as a lot of good work is already taking place to meet the aspirations set out in each of the priorities and that recognition of this should be given. Linked to this, stakeholders also reported that the aspirations and themes in the strategy are familiar and to really move forward to achieve these aspirations it will require a clear plan, allocated ownership and responsibility.

5.4 Engaging the audience

These concerns highlight the importance of developing a strategy which is easily readable and appropriate to each of the audiences it engages. For the strategy to be practical for its readers, different audiences must be able to easily identify both the strategic objectives they are aiming towards, as well as the practical guidance which is relevant to their organisation. One practical suggestion from local authority representatives for ensuring that the strategy is representative is to follow a logic model approach. This approach would clearly outline the high level objectives to be achieved, and then work backwards to understand what would need to happen to achieve these: what activity is required of each stakeholder group, what resources each group would need to carry out this activity and achieve these objectives, and what activities each stakeholder would need to focus on.

5.5 Clarity and coordination

Consultation with almost all stakeholder audiences highlighted that the roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholder organisations in delivering the vision for sport are often unclear. Feedback suggested that service delivery between Sport Wales, Local Authorities, Education, NGBS, clubs, and other stakeholders, is fragmented.

The picture developing from feedback is one of different bodies working mainly independently, despite working towards similar goals. For example, some local authority representatives were unclear in what role Sport Wales would take in actually delivering the strategy and working with other partners, and many clubs were unsure whether they should look to Sport Wales, their NGB, or their Local Authority for support in developing their club.

At one focus group of club representatives, the extent of confusion around where to look for funding, who to approach for support, or where to access club details was so great that participants suggested that all sports development activities should be driven by a single body rather than being divided across different partners. The draft strategy sets out an expectation for "how sport should decentralise", however this feedback directly challenges this expectation by suggesting that centralising some functions would make it easier to develop sports at the community level.

Feedback suggests that there is a requirement for improved cooperation and collaboration, with Sport Wales, Local Authorities, NGBs, and education practitioners working in coordinated and complementary roles. For this to happen there needs to be increased communication between stakeholder organisations, as well as agreement

over which bodies are responsible for providing which elements of support and development. Consultation and consensus should therefore be at the heart of the strategy for developing community sports.

Finally, we received feedback that there is a greater need for consultation between local stakeholders and community clubs. Some local authorities indicated they felt that it was the NGBs' role to drive development at the club level, while different clubs looked to different partners, all partners, or none to support the development of their club. This suggests that there is a disconnection between the community clubs delivering sports development in the field, and the agencies supporting development. While some clubs report positive stories of support from local authorities or NGBs or grants received from Sport Wales, these stories are patchy with clubs in some sports being supported by their NGB while others have no support.

5.6 Locally-Defined Sports

5.6.1 Issues/concerns identified (identifying specific concerns for specific groups)

Overall the local authority and education stakeholders spoke of the need for greater collaboration between all stakeholders at a local level – the need for more partnership working to make community sport work. Aside from this, the main challenges identified by stakeholders were:

- ★ knowing what's available already in a local area
- ★ understanding what local communities want and need

All stakeholder groups appreciated that each locality would have different needs and that this is more than just regional differences but at a local level within each local authority area. What is and/or could be available in a local area was often dictated by the facilities available.

“identify what clubs need and want. Get the local people engaged and local venue providers on board to work in sync”

Many local authority representatives indicated that there is a need to have a true picture of sports in an area to inform development of sports at a local level. At the moment understanding the provision that is available and the numbers participating is difficult because clubs that only offer recreational opportunities tend not to register with the NGB for their sport and therefore are not 'counted'. In addition, many University clubs are not registered with NGBs, and therefore their offerings are not easily identifiable either.

“Not all sport participation is recorded and this makes it difficult to get an accurate picture”

Another challenge reported by several local authority representatives is that, to understand community needs, they need to engage local communities. This was perceived to be resource intensive, expensive and generally results in low response rates. This they said, makes it hard to justify extensive consultation, which stakeholders feel would be required to truly understand what communities need and want. One local authority stakeholder also suggested that widespread community consultation could raise expectations and there is only so much that local authorities can deliver within their budgets to meet the needs identified by these communities.

5.6.2 Practical suggestions for enhancing community sport

Charting the landscape

All stakeholders recognised that there needs to be better data in relation to availability of opportunities. The collection of this is fragmented at present with no single group having a clear overview. It is also a constantly changing landscape so difficult to keep an accurate picture. Although all stakeholder groups suggested that more needs to be done to better monitor participation opportunities and levels, there was no agreement on who would be best placed to take responsibility for this.

NGB membership and affiliation structures

At the moment information on opportunities is largely drawn from NGB data on member/affiliate clubs. Regular participants and local authority stakeholders suggested that that NGBs should be encouraged or required to create different tiers of membership or affiliation that would be attractive to non-competitive/recreational clubs and University clubs, as at the moment there is no incentive for these clubs to join their NGB and the majority therefore don't. If recreational clubs were also engaged with their relevant sport's NGB then this would help to build a complete picture of the true participation levels and opportunities in any given area.

It would also be important for NGBs to collect information on the extent of participation at each 'level' (e.g. competitive, recreational/social) in member/affiliate clubs.

Club charging structures

Stakeholders were all aware of clubs that charged the same membership or sessional fees to their recreational participants and competitive participants, and were concerned that this could put people off either joining or staying.

Taking sport into the community

It was also suggested that NGBs could organise and run roadshows in local communities, or piggy back onto existing community events to showcase their sport and make people more aware of the opportunities in the local area to get involved – both from a participation perspective but also in terms of attracting potential volunteers.

Local sports development

It was accepted across all stakeholder groups that NGB local development officers have the responsibility to 'develop their sport' at a local level, and that more of it needs to be happening. However there was an appreciation amongst local authority representatives that different NGBs have different levels of resources available to them and there was a need to support those less well resourced. Some local authority representatives reported that they take this approach currently and work with NGBs to support local development work. Amongst the local authorities already doing this, some wait for the NGBs to be proactive and approach them whilst others actively approach NGBs to find out what support they need.

It was widely accepted that Local Authority Sport Development Officers would likely have the most complete picture of community needs and what is currently available. However, there was also recognition of demand for consultation with communities. If resources are made available and there is a commitment to engaging and listening to the community then community consultation in each area would be possible. These consultation events could also be used to raise awareness of what is already available in the community.

It was also suggested that the 5x60 initiative could and should be helping to provide intelligence and insights into the sports and activities that young people want and are engaging with, and the commitment from the necessary partners in terms of engaging communities to understand the needs and to give them a say in the development and running of sports at a local level.

All stakeholders were in agreement that to really make sport local, and have provision that meets local needs, local development/action plans that have cross stakeholder buy in and clear areas of ownership are required.

5.7 Strong Enterprising Clubs.

5.7.1 Issues/concerns identified (identifying specific concerns for specific groups)

The main challenges identified by stakeholders in relation to this priority were:

- ★ increasing participation in appropriate and sustainable ways
- ★ the confidence and capability of club leaders to run their clubs in an enterprising way
- ★ mismatches between club leaders and the aspirations of younger members
- ★ finance eg for travel and equipment

The aspiration to increase participation in clubs is supported, but it was recognised that for some clubs doubling membership is not feasible, nor desirable. Taking a blanket approach to doubling the number of participants may not be the right approach, as some clubs may already have a healthy number of participants for the area they cover. In addition increasing membership numbers creates challenges for clubs in relation to facilities, staffing and equipment. One example was given of a netball club which currently has a waiting list for people to join simply because the club cannot find suitable premises nor find volunteer coaches. There is a need to focus on the quality of clubs – as well as the number of participants.

Stakeholders also commented that rising fuel costs make travelling to clubs or participating in league games prohibitive (e.g. there is not a netball league in Neath Port Talbot, the closest and where people currently travel is Swansea). We also heard that public transport in some areas is limited in the evening and if people do not have access to their own transport it makes participation difficult. Challenges like these will make it harder for clubs to attract new members

Some stakeholders also reported that people running clubs were often from 'older generations' – which at times can lead to a disconnect between what young people want and expect.

“Need to be good with kids and understand them so the younger the coach, the better”

Further still, rather than strong enterprising clubs, it is normally strong enterprising individuals trying to do everything at a club. This goes back to the difficulty in finding and attracting a volunteer workforce.

It was also suggested by regular participants in sport that club coordinators are struggling with the day to day running of their club – they suggested that the funding that is needed should be to help with this but it is not clear how this would help a club's future sustainability.

One example given was of a sailing club that needed to buy two new engines for their 'ribs' – over £10K cost. It is tough for clubs to meet these costs whilst trying to keep membership costs at a level whereby clubs are being inclusive and not creating barriers to entry to the sport. However, being inclusive but charging enough to be sustainable creates a conflict.

In terms of clubs working together for their mutual benefit stakeholders suggested that in many instances competition between clubs will be a barrier. However, the 'success' stories that were discussed during the

focus groups have seen different sports of similar disciplines working together to share facilities, equipment and other resources. For this to work on a bigger scale it will require facilitator/coordinator as clubs often do not have the time to make these links themselves.

5.7.2 Practical suggestions for enhancing community sport

Sharing intelligence about what works

Stakeholders suggested that it would be helpful to share intelligence and learn from others about the kind of approaches clubs can take to raise participation levels, including what has worked elsewhere and what tools and approaches other clubs use to increase participation is needed as a means of helping clubs attract new members.

An example was given of a 5x60 officer who has a target for 'conversion rate' (i.e. number of young people attending that then go on to join a club) – it was suggested that this places an emphasis on ensuring 5x60 is creating a pathway into community and club sports which if done more widely increases the member base of clubs in the community. Another example was given whereby a mixed discipline outdoor club has been particularly successful in attracting 'whole families' as new members, offering family memberships and the scope to try lots of different outdoor activities.

In some local authority areas, leisure centres act as sport hubs, providing and/or signposting members to progression and pathway routes. At the heart of this is the interaction between leisure centre staff and their members – getting to know members and feeling comfortable about encouraging them to 'try something new'. For example, one leisure centre has seen good success encouraging fitness suite users to join a local triathlon club.

Raising funds

It was suggested that clubs need to be more innovative and enterprising when it comes to raising funds. A participant from a sailing club gave an example of how their club had managed to get corporate sponsorship at one of their events/competitions –

“it's things like this that can help financially support clubs and make them more business minded”

Other examples included clubs that have their own premises and equipment and had made arrangements with local businesses to provide corporate membership to their staff. This needn't be restricted to clubs that have their own premises though.

Collaboration

Despite competition between clubs being described as a barrier to working together, there are many instances where this is already happening. There were examples given of clubs from similar sports but different disciplines coming together to form a single multi-sport club (e.g. sailing, kayaking, canoeing and swimming). This has helped the clubs to attract and retain members as the clubs have a wider and more diverse offering that interests people, whilst also providing pathways into other sports. There were also examples of where clubs are already sharing facilities and have come together under a single management structure. Local Authority representatives commented that in these situations it is easier to support one big group than lots of little groups. Again, stakeholders pointed out the need for facilitation to make this happen on a larger scale.

Tooling up club leaders

Feedback from stakeholders also suggested that in many cases leaders within the clubs don't have the tools they need to run clubs effectively. Club leaders are often excellent coaches but lack the knowledge in terms of developing their club and need guidance and support to do this. One area is around understanding technology and how to engage with children – using social media such as Twitter and Facebook. Although club leaders and representatives do need support, they also need to be more proactive themselves about how to advertise their club and recruit new members (not just flyers and adverts in local papers – community clubs should have a presence at community open days and events), which can do more to show the social and fun side of sport. It was suggested that NGBs have a significant role in helping give clubs the tools and knowledge to develop.

Providing a recreational offer

As it is hard to get a true picture of what recreational sport opportunities are in each area, it was difficult for stakeholders to say whether there is a need for clubs to have both a competitive and recreational offer. They questioned whether, as long as both are available in an area, does it matter if both are run by a single club. Local Authority staff also commented that leisure centres try as much as they can to 'fill the gap' in recreation opportunities where clubs don't.

5.8 The Education Agenda

5.8.1 Issues/concerns identified (identifying specific concerns for specific groups)

The main challenges emerging from discussions about this priority were:

- ★ closer connections between clubs and all levels of education
- ★ the priority given to PE and physical literacy in schools

Feedback from stakeholders suggested that relationships between schools and community clubs needs to be developed and strengthened to ensure facilities were being used to their fullest. However, there was little agreement about whether responsibility lay with the club or with the school. This lack of leadership meant that sometimes neither schools nor clubs acted to develop links. Amongst all stakeholder groups there was recognition that many schools are resistant to letting clubs use facilities for a number of valid reasons, and this continues to be an issue. However, FE and HE are much more open to this and are very active, largely because it is an income stream for their facility managers.

All stakeholder groups acknowledged that a wider range of sports need to be available in school, and that 5x60 was going some way to achieving this. Many clubs, and NGBs, are keen to access schools and run sessions for the students. However, it is easy for schools to be overwhelmed by multiple approaches and end up doing nothing. If this could be facilitated better, it could contribute to widening the offering for students and develop pathways to community clubs.

Some local authorities indicated that there was a challenge in engaging primary school children in sports, and that at times it was left to teaching assistants to take children during sports lessons or to accommodate disabled children during sports lessons. This comes back to a teachers' ability to engage children in sport, to make it appealing and fun. This could partly be a cultural issue where low value is placed on sport participation, or a confidence/skills issue where a teacher is not equipped to make sports engaging and fun.

A stakeholder representative of an outdoor activity centre run by a local authority in North Wales had reported that cost was being raised as a barrier. Head teachers had been telling them that the cost of bringing students to the outdoor centre was becoming difficult for some parents to meet and becoming a barrier to participation.

Feedback from education and local authority stakeholders suggested that, although teachers are best placed, it is not a teacher's responsibility to push children to participate in extra-curricular sports or engage with community clubs, but that those teachers who recognise the wider benefits of sport participation will encourage this. It was also said that teachers do not have a responsibility to refer students to centres of excellence where they feel students have potential – this is done on good will. If teachers were to have responsibility for students referral and engagement this would require a significant culture shift which would not be achieved overnight

Achieving culture change or a shift in policy to prioritise sports development is a significant challenge. For example, physical literacy being awarded the same status as literacy or numeracy requires a shift in culture. There is an acceptance that there is a growing evidence base to support the impact that physical literacy can have on a person's development and wellbeing though people still need to be convinced of this. In terms of delivering two hours of PE this would require a change to the school day and curriculum and would need support from the very top.

It was clear from discussions in focus groups with education representatives that Further Education and Higher Education partners are not always engaged in discussion relating to community sport even though they have a significant role to play. This needs to change, and there is certainly an appetite amongst the HE and FE representatives involved in this research to become more involved.

5.8.2 Practical suggestions for enhancing community sport

Bringing HE and FE into the fold

Higher and Further Education representatives are very keen to be more involved in and play 'their part' in developing community sports. HE and FE stakeholders wanted to be more involved with local stakeholders to ensure a common understanding of priorities. FE and HE representatives currently felt that they were only seen as being able to offer 'facilities' – but have so much more to offer community sports like development opportunities and access to research. At present new schemes and programmes are notified to local authority and other partners but HE/FE representatives reported only ever finding out by accident. FE and HE representatives reported that other stakeholders in the sports sector need to be more aware that colleges and universities have a huge captive audience that they can be signposting to clubs, leisure centres, coaching and development, or volunteering opportunities, but need to know that they exist in order to do that.

“At the University we have a huge captive audience that we could be signposting to initiatives and opportunities – but we only seem to find out about them by accident or not at all”

Inclusive, student-centred provision

Some education representatives indicated that a new generation of PE teachers is emerging and they are much more focussed on inclusion – this will start to change how sport is delivered and what sports young people are exposed to. This will also be important for ensuring sports are inclusive for young people with disabilities.

Stakeholders are aware of schools where teachers invite pupils to comment and feedback suggestions in relation to the PE programme. This is one way of letting students influence sport in their school though this is not a consistent feature across all schools and needs to be encouraged. It was also noted that 5x60 has contributed a lot to giving students a say in what sports are available to them.

“We need young people participating in the planning process e.g. What sports, how often and where”

Stakeholders also believed that secondary schools and their feeder primaries should liaise more closely about the sports offered to pupils at primary school so that secondary schools can align and build on this to provide a relevant offer/provision that gives a degree of progression and consistency. Linked to this, one FE college reported that they were one of only a small number of colleges that had continued to run a 5X30 programme for its students. They believe that a 5X30 programme is important to providing continuity for students coming up from high school (as they have been so used to 5x60 by now) and that it helps to address a key 'drop off' point for young people in sport. They believe that all colleges should run (and see the benefit of running) a 5X30 programme.

Aligning with the curriculum

Following the discussion relating to club links with schools, one suggestion was that clubs could be supported to deliver curriculum compatible sports lessons, whereby clubs could simultaneously support the school to achieve curricular excellence, while clubs benefit from engaging participants. It would also be beneficial to teachers who would undoubtedly develop their knowledge and skills by being part of this approach. It was acknowledged that facilitation/co-ordination would be needed to support the development of structured links between clubs/NGBs and schools.

In terms of broadening the reach and appeal of different sports, it was recognised that some NGBs are responding to the importance of making their sport relevant locally and adapting so that the sport is more relevant and accessible (e.g. the introduction of mini games, indoor versions of the sport). Some NGBs are looking at how they can better align their offering with the school curriculum which could help to attract young people into the sport whilst providing a pathway from school into a community club. It was also suggested that there were opportunities for clubs to support what students are doing in school to help to attract new members – one example was given where lots of young people are getting involved in badminton in school and although there are several senior badminton clubs in the area, very few support junior opportunities. Clubs need to be made aware of these opportunities to boost their membership and supported to best exploit them.

Expanding Dragon Sport

As much as NGBs are responsible for promoting their sport and broadening the reach and appeal of their sport, education representatives suggested that Dragon Sport needs to be opened up to include all sports and not just the 8 currently included. This would help give young people greater exposure to a wider range of sports and potentially contribute to increasing awareness and the appeal of different sports. If the programme can't be opened up to include all sports, one suggestion was that each local area should be able to define which sports are their 'Dragon Sports' – particularly if this is a community strategy and aimed at delivering what a community wants and needs.

Strengthening the status of physical literacy in schools

Stakeholders indicated that evidence is required to support and justify culture change to ensure that physical literacy is held in the same regard as literacy. This evidence needs to be gathered and a case made which can be used to influence perceptions. It was also acknowledged by education that many head teachers are becoming more switched on to the benefits of physical education and physical literacy – but recognised that it was slow, and required a big culture shift.

“ I speak to more and more head teachers that are supportive of getting students involved in physical activity and recognise the role that physical activity can play in a student’s overall development ”

Teachers have a role in helping to accelerate this shift and selling the benefits to their head teacher. One stakeholder was aware of a pilot in a school where physical literacy is being used to develop literacy and numeracy. The pilot is working with disengaged pupils interested in sport, using nutrition, session planning and other sports and wellbeing topics to develop numeracy and literacy skills. It is using a subject pupils are interested in, to develop other key skills. The impacts of this type of pilot on the development of young people needs to be captured and shared widely to help build the case.

In terms of changes to the curriculum and a driver for schools to improve what they offer and deliver stakeholders feel that this requires buy in from the top – Welsh Government and the Directors for Education in the local authorities – without their buy in, commitment and support, it will be very difficult to consistently influence what is delivered in schools. There is also a feeling amongst stakeholders in education that the wellbeing aspect of ESTYN inspections is little more than a tick box exercise, largely because inspectors 'don't understand it'. Stakeholders in education acknowledged that some progress had been made around this but more was needed. The expectation from these stakeholders is that Sport Wales have a job to do in getting buy in and support for the strategy from the Welsh Government

5.9 High Performing Workforce

5.9.1 Issues/concerns identified (identifying specific concerns for specific groups)

The majority of the issues identified about this priority relate the to challenge of working with a largely volunteer workforce:

- ★ recruiting and retaining volunteers
- ★ volunteer learning and development
- ★ succession planning

The issues around volunteer recruitment were a constant during discussions with all stakeholder groups and no-one denied that there is a need to increase the number of volunteers and coaches working locally. This was seen as needing a cultural change amongst communities as much as it needs clubs to be more proactive and innovative in how they attract and support a volunteer workforce. The principal challenges relate to:

- ★ attracting high quality, reliable volunteers
- ★ costs and time associated with training volunteers to the necessary qualification levels
- ★ costs, workload, time and stigma associated with CRB checks

FE and HE could be helping to identify the future volunteers and coaches in their student population but lack of engagement with the sector leaves a disconnect in terms of how and where this could be co-ordinated. It was also suggested by regular participants in sport that stakeholders such as Sport Wales and local authorities should be leading by example with their staff getting involved in community clubs on a volunteer basis.

Stakeholders reported the two principal challenges in training and developing the volunteer workforce as:

- ★ identifying the most appropriate people to be developed
- ★ the time and financial requirements of carrying out such development

In addition, it was suggested that volunteers struggle to find the time to engage with good and beneficial development opportunities. It was also pointed out that whilst UKCC provide the standard coaching qualification, courses are limited and without grant funding it can be expensive and therefore create barriers to participation.

“UKCC provide the standard qualification however courses are limited and without grant funding is very costly”

Feedback from one local authority stakeholder also suggested that in the outdoor activity arena getting the necessary qualifications to lead or support an activity can be tougher than in a lot of other sports. It is a very high risk environment that these individuals are working in with a lot of responsibility and the rigour of the qualification and assessment is high, so too is the time investment required. This can make it challenging to develop a volunteer workforce in the outdoor activity environment.

Thinking about succession planning, stakeholders reported that it was essential for clubs to get their recruitment, retention and development sorted out first before turning their minds to preparing for succession.

Fewer challenges were identified for the 'paid workforce' - including teachers and leisure centre workers - though to meet certain aspirations set out in the strategy (i.e. every teacher being able to deliver high quality PE) would require a change to initial teacher training and teacher CPD requirements. Again, this would require buy in and influence from the very top. Stakeholders feel that local authorities are generally very good at developing their own staff who deliver programmes but the feeling was that more could be done to extend these development opportunities to community coaches, through links with FE and HE partners.

The disability sport representative highlighted the impact on the community-based workforce of the national strategic push for more opportunities for integration and inclusion rather than separating disability sports from the mainstream. This will have workforce development implications, as both the paid and volunteer workforce will need training and development to be able to offer these integrated opportunities.

Stakeholders also indicated that the limited number of paid coaching opportunities available will impact on the sector's ability to attract the best talent and that little can be done about this. Attracting the best talent into local coaching roles, where there are only a limited number of paid opportunities, will have limited effectiveness.

5.9.2 Practical suggestions for enhancing community sport

A coordinated approach to volunteering

There is little doubt amongst stakeholders that the majority of clubs understand the need to recruit and retain volunteers - but beyond 'the usual routes' of engaging parents or long term members many are not sure where to start. Clubs need guidance and support to achieve this and be more innovative in the ways that they recruit volunteers. A suggestion from local authority stakeholders was the creation of a sport volunteer co-ordinator role for each region, who would 'hold a bank' of willing volunteers and can deploy them to where the need is and ensure that all individuals have had CRB checks and have the necessary qualifications/skills/experience. In Anglesey the local authority is currently looking at some software which would enable them to provide a

matching service between clubs and people interested in volunteering in sport, which if viable would serve to carry out this function.

Leaders of the future

Stakeholders suggested that many of the future leaders, coaches and volunteers in sport will come from those who are currently members/participants in sport. Stakeholders feel that there needs to be greater awareness amongst those currently involved in sport about the pathways to becoming coaches or volunteers – for many when they stop being competitive they want to give something back.

In Anglesey, the local authority run a community sport leader award. As part of this award participants are required to carry out 30 hours of volunteering in sport, and when selecting participants they try to select those that they feel will stay the course and continue to volunteer in sport thereafter. Although the local authority representative did not have exact figures on how many participants do continue to volunteer in sport beyond the course it is making more people aware of the need and opportunities to get involved.

FE and HE representatives reported increasing numbers on sports/coaching education programmes, which will be an important source of future coaches and leaders. They can influence the coaches of the future through these programmes, but need to be engaged locally to understand what is needed of tomorrow's leaders. This will help colleges and universities to ensure that their courses are delivering what is required – of coaches, teachers, leisure centre staff etc. Linked to this, an FE college reported that they have started delivering a 'pathway to apprenticeship in sport' – completion of which lets the participant go on to study for a wide range of coaching and non-coaching roles in sport. It is important that these students are engaged and are aware of the opportunities available in community sports.

Sport leadership programmes being delivered in schools were also seen as a practical way to start developing and engaging the leaders of tomorrow. Another idea was to encourage teachers to involve students in the teaching process to develop young coaches/leaders and some Young Ambassadors indicated they felt more opportunities for young people to engage in coaching and leadership in sport were necessary. Young Ambassadors were also seen as potential future leaders in sport by other stakeholders and it was suggested that a platinum level Young Ambassador programme to keep them engaged through FE/HE/employment should be developed. Stakeholders that have had involvement with Young Ambassadors report being hugely impressed by them and are keen to ensure that they remain engaged in sport.

Building capacity in the club workforce

NGBs are seen by local authorities, education representative and Young Ambassadors alike, as having a responsibility to be supporting their clubs on the ground in terms of supporting and developing the workforce, and not done in such a way that it is perceived as an income generation tool. A quality club workforce will benefit the sport as whole.

One suggestion was for NGBs to have 'expert coaches' that are mobile – delivering 'masterclass' sessions in different regions on different dates. This could have a dual purpose whereby the 'expert coach' delivers a session to club participants with the club coaches supporting the delivery which would develop the coaches whilst giving members/participants exposure to fresh training ideas and techniques. This would help to attract and retain members whilst also assisting coaches to improve their own offering and delivery. In addition, if this approach was facilitated in such a way that it brought a number of clubs together for the 'masterclass' sessions, clubs would create their own networks and this would lead to the sharing of good practice and potential collaborative working.

Qualifications geared to community sports

A local authority stakeholder also suggested that there should be a review of the standards required by UKCC. The expectations of an elite national team coach should be very different from someone coaching at a small

local club. One idea put forward was that coaching qualifications, could as an option, also include learning in relation to club development. Often the quality of the coach is not in doubt but their ability to develop a club could be better. Some stakeholders also asked if there was any scope to compress the delivery of coaching qualification (though without diluting the quality) to reduce the time commitment required or whether greater flexibility could be built in to the delivery

The role of leisure centres

The strategy's aspiration to ensure ALL leisure centre staff are trained to develop programmes was contested by local authorities. Local Authorities indicated it was more important and practical to identify the relevant staff to be equipped to do this, not ALL staff. Local Authorities indicated that for some staff it is more important that they have good customer service skills – speaking with users/members, building the rapport that helps to make participation a good experience and encourages continued use and knowing what else is available and being able to signpost people to that and create pathways.

5.10 Facilities that are Fit for Purpose

5.10.1 Issues/concerns identified (identifying specific concerns for specific groups)

The main issue discussed about this priority was affordability. Stakeholders reported that, whilst it is essential to have facilities that are fit for purpose, these facilities need to be affordable to the clubs that could be and want to be using them.

Regular participants of sports, that also had an insight into the running of clubs, reported that the cost of facility hire is rising year on year – and clubs can only pass so much of this additional cost onto members before it becomes price prohibitive and affects how inclusive a club can be.

Some regular participants in sport also reported that facilities charge the same for the 'space' regardless of whether it is a competitive or recreational club or what age group is attending.

“Prices are different for different age groups but small clubs with low numbers can't afford it regardless whether they are adults. Need to keep costs low to keep members”

This is not perceived as being conducive to community sports as many clubs charge a lot less for their junior classes than they do senior. Linked to this some local authorities indicated concerns about getting the right people into positions of management at leisure centres and facilities to ensure that resources are run effectively

Stakeholders reported that income generation tends to be what drives the design of new and existing facilities – if it isn't demonstrated that something will give a return it is very unlikely that it will be invested in. Providing affordable facilities to clubs, whilst generating sufficient income to ensure facilities are sustainable, and well maintained is challenging.

Another issue, one that impacted on the accessibility of a facility, was given by a local authority officer. The local authority has an outdoor activity centre which received funding to develop a mountain bike track. The original intention had been to use Forestry Commission land to develop the track on, which would have meant open access for all at all times of the day. However, the funding that the council had received had to be 'spent'

in a specific timeframe and the time that would be required to go through the process of applying to use Forestry Commission land meant that an alternative had to be found. This resulted in the bike track being developed on the grounds of the activity centre which restricts when it can be used as other activities are being run on the grounds as well. This is an isolated example, but one which highlights the influence that funding requirements and approval processes can have on the accessibility of facilities and the extent of their use.

Another challenge is that local authorities cannot look at sport in isolation as they are also constrained by other community developments and spending priorities – this can mean sport doesn't get the resources allocated to it at a local level where other social factors are more pressing.

Finally, the disability sport representative also highlighted the need for accessibility to be considered more thoughtfully, to ensure that new and existing facilities are genuinely fit for use by all people who want to play sport.

5.10.2 Practical suggestions for enhancing community sport

The role of leisure centres

There is a need to get buy-in from leisure centre operators to deliver against the Community Sports development agenda, for raising participation, diversifying the sports available, and making sure that sports and facilities reflect the needs of the community

The right facilities

A point was raised by local authority stakeholders that, whilst facilities should be fit for purpose, there is also a need to ask 'is the purpose fit for the facility'. An example was given where leisure centres in one local authority area had taken a lot of the dance/fitness type classes out of the leisure centre and into community halls and other venues. This has attracted more participants to these classes (as delivery is more localised) whilst also freeing up the leisure centre space for other sports activities (e.g. badminton, basketball, netball etc). This makes sure that they are making best use of the facilities available, creating spaces for clubs to use, whilst not impacting on their 'leisure/fitness' offering. It was also suggested that this doesn't need to be restricted to just leisure/fitness activities; numerous sports can be delivered in a community hall (e.g. martial arts).

Exploiting existing assets

Utilising school facilities both during the school day and after school hours was also seen as key to making more facilities available. There were two examples of how local authorities have 'control' of the sports facilities used by schools and the school need to book out the time they need to deliver their curriculum and extracurricular activities and anytime of the day it is not being used can be booked out by clubs/community groups. In relation to school premises being available after school hours, there is currently a pilot in Wrexham where the local authority invested to have a keyless entry system fitted to the school. Clubs are vetted to ensure that they have suitably qualified staff and that someone qualified in first aid will be present and receive a key fob which is programmed to only give them access to the areas that they need. The local authority worked closely with their health and safety team to mitigate and minimise the risks which led to the authority approving the scheme. If successful this could potentially remove a big barrier to opening up school premises after hours as no staffing is required.

Another example, specifically for swimming clubs, has allowed a local authority to meet the needs of local swimming clubs in relation to early opening hours. The big barrier to early opening was being able to staff the swimming pool with lifeguards. The solution was to train representatives of the club as lifeguards and teach them to carry out the chemical tests that are required.

Geographical collaboration

Stakeholders believe that there needs to be better 'cross border' collaboration and consideration – for example ensuring new facilities are geographically positioned to meet the needs of several localities across different LA regions. The main challenge with this however is that all relevant authorities in the sports sector must collaborate and be ready to invest at the same time which requires longer term vision and planning.

“It is better to have one excellent multi-function facility that covers 3 local authority areas than 1 average facility in each of the different areas”

Mobile facilities

A suggestion put forward by Young Ambassadors was to increase the availability and use of portable facilities to bring sports into different communities. Although this was not seen as a permanent solution to having the right mix of facilities available it could prove invaluable in terms of 'showcasing sports' at community events.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Are the priorities the right ones?

Feedback from the various consultation groups confirms broad agreement that the areas identified as priorities within the draft strategy are the right ones. Some stakeholders did however question the validity and feasibility of some of the detailed aspirations within the priorities.

6.2 Partner collaboration

To meet the aspirations set out in the draft strategy there will need to be close collaboration between all stakeholders at a local and national level. Achievement of the aspirations will require the buy in and contribution of all stakeholders, with clear roles and areas of ownership. Consideration will also have to be given as to how the community strategy informs, aligns and contributes to local stakeholders' plans and priorities.

Feedback also suggests that certain aspects and aspirations will need to be achieved before others, as these will act as enablers for other aspirations in the strategy (and the order of this will potentially be different in some areas than in others depending on the conditions present). Therefore a planned and co-ordinated approach will be required by all those involved. For example:

- ★ Supporting clubs to develop excellent volunteer recruitment and support structures will be an enabler to succession planning
- ★ Increasing the number of volunteers in community sport and improving accessibility to suitable facilities will be key enablers in helping clubs to increase membership and expand opportunity

A part of this process is in ensuring that ALL the relevant stakeholders are identified and engaged. We heard from the FE and HE sector representatives that they feel that their potential contribution to developing community sport is largely unrecognised and that they are often unaware of other stakeholders' activities and initiatives. Involvement of the HE and FE sectors will be vital in achieving the aspirations set out in the 'High Performing Workforce' priority.

6.3 Local communication and consultation

At a local level it is going to be important that stakeholders/partners regularly communicate and consult with one another to keep abreast of what opportunities, initiatives and activities are available to support the development of community sport. All partners involved need to have clarity around what support is available, from whom and how to access it to ensure that clubs, volunteers and communities are aware of, and receiving the support they need.

6.4 Understanding where we are starting from

In terms of demonstrating whether some of the aspirations set out in the strategy have been achieved a baseline position will need to be established. This is particularly important in respect of current participation and opportunity levels. Linked to this, there were wider questions about how success will be measured.

6.5 Involving and supporting clubs

There is a real desire from clubs to have closer relationship with strategic partners. This would involve more frequent and proactive communication, both formal and informal, for example picking up the phone or popping in and having a chat with club representatives. The things that clubs see as a priority for them align with the aspirations set out in the draft strategy. Achieving those aspirations will organically support clubs to overcome many of the barriers they currently face in relation to club sustainability and development.

Clubs see the support landscape as being very fragmented and lacking a joined up approach from all stakeholders. They often don't know what support is available and who they should approach for different types of support. As we have discussed above, it will require close communication and co-ordination between all partners to ensure that clubs feel consulted and that they have clarity around what support is available to them and how they can access it.

Providing some kind of facilitation/coordination for clubs around key areas of development will be critical, and include:

- ★ making links and collaborating with other clubs and stakeholders
- ★ links with schools, FE and HE
- ★ sharing learning and good practice
- ★ volunteer recruitment through a volunteer bank or matching service for example

6.6 Involving schools

All stakeholders recognised the crucial role that schools have in contributing to the development of community sports, and engaging schools in a strategic and co-ordinated manner will be vital.

Schools have a valuable resource in terms of their facilities and feedback suggests that this is often under-utilised for a number of reasons and challenges faced by schools in doing this. Working with schools at a local level to develop solutions that will overcome these challenges will open up this valuable resource.

Furthermore, there is a real desire amongst clubs to work with schools, but many clubs reported having difficulty in engaging with schools. For this to be successful there needs to be a more co-ordinated approach to this at a local level, understanding a schools needs and how a club or clubs can contribute to that. The work currently being undertaken by some NGBs to align their sports delivery with that of the school curriculum has the potential to make this an 'easier sell' to schools and teachers.

Some of the aspirations that require fundamental changes to teacher practice, training or the curriculum will require the buy in and leadership from the Welsh Government in order to influence and drive the changes.

6.7 Fit for purpose facilities and purposes fit for facilities

Price/affordability and accessibility are the two fundamental aspects that will either enable or restrict clubs' and communities' ability to make use of facilities. Year on year price increases and flat pricing structures are creating barriers for some, as is the issue of accessing appropriate 'time slots' for sessions.

This highlights the importance of ensuring that all facilities that could be getting used (eg school facilities, community centres, church halls) are being used and that clubs and others are aware of all facilities available.

Further to this, it will be important to support and encourage facilities to question whether the activities running are making best use of the facilities. For instance alternative approaches could be taken that would free up the space allowing it to be used in a more appropriate way and by clubs/sports that do not have any alternatives. For example, exercise and fitness classes that are being run in leisure centres (in spaces that can be used for badminton, basketball, hockey etc) could be moved to church halls or community centres.

6.8 Pilots, initiatives and good practice

Throughout the consultation process we heard about a number of initiatives and pilots that will potentially contribute to meeting the aspirations in the draft strategy are currently underway. Some of these are detailed in the report. It will be important to understand and recognise the work that is already on-going, investigate the potential for replicating across other areas and sharing the findings and outcomes of these initiatives and pilots with stakeholders locally and nationally.