

Department for Culture, Media and Sport

A New Strategy for Sport: Consultation Paper

Theme 1: Participation

How can we address the recent decline in the number of people that regularly take part in sport and deliver a long-term sustainable increase in participation?

The way we live our lives has changed. Structurally people's days are more fragmented and chaotic than a generation ago, with more pressures on time than ever before and greater safety concerns with the roaming distance of children shrinking year on year. For those in employment, working hours are getting longer meaning time for hobbies, socialising, sport and physical activity is being squeezed. However, it is fair to say that different genders and age groups need different offers.

Anecdotally, YMCA is seeing a reduction in the interest for team sports which require a reasonably large number of people to turn up at the same time, on the same day, on a regular basis. We are seeing a greater appetite for non-traditional, individual sports which people can participate in with very little planning notice and on their own terms. Facilities and membership structures need to reflect these changes.

The social side of sport has always been present with participants historically socialising with team members after games. What we are seeing is a demand for the social side to be included within the actual participation of sport itself. The line between socialising and sports participation is blurring. For example, we know through our own research that young people want to be able to take part in sport but chat, post on social media and listen to music at the same time and so creating an environment where this can happen is important. Typically sports such as BMXing, skateboarding etc lend themselves to this.

Young people also have a different attitude to sport than we might think. Sport doesn't always need to be fun. It does however need to provide the possibility of strengthening their CV to support further education or employment applications in an increasingly competitive environment. It also needs to be structured so they can dip in and participate prior to major events in their social calendar such as holidays, schools proms, etc. as they heavily link it to providing the body shape they aspire to. The way we communicate the sporting offer needs to reflect this.

We strongly believe that sports participation needs to be woven in to everyday life and so we still agree with the thoughts contained within the Marmot report; that settings in which we all live our lives need to facilitate health and participation whether that be in the communities in which we live, work or play. How this translates is to work with employers to support them to realise the power of sport both for the individual but also for the benefit of the organisation. How they can use their settings and resources to facilitate participation amongst their workforce, whether that be the provision of

showers, cycle parking, flexible working or subsidised fitness facility memberships. All this sounds like a 'nice to have' and we need to work harder to make the compelling argument that sport benefits all. In Finland, physical activity is a basic cultural right, and this is recognised by government, employers and society as a whole. It has resulted in 'facilities' popping up throughout communities, in the smallest of neighbourhoods and with employers contributing towards the cost of employee participation in clubs and activity. This provision and support, taking place where people work, live and play, has directly resulted in an increase in participation. We need to create a message that sells sport as the norm not as a hobby for skilled, athletic people.

Sport need not be competitive. Yes, competition is important to a certain cohort and competition should always be available through sport. But by introducing competition you also introduce the need to have a certain skill base and level of commitment to become involved. Sport should be accessible to all, regardless of skill or experience, without the need for specialist, expensive equipment or without the need to access a specialist facility. Our local environments need to be designed to support participation, removing the need to have to travel to participate. This clearly is not the responsibility of Sport England or DCMS. All sectors of government and industry need to recognise the need to create environments that allow for simple participation in cycling, walking, running and play.

As people travel through the lifecourse their motivations and needs will change. At some point people will join sports clubs, people will join fitness facilities, people will compete. What doesn't change is the need to be able to access sport from their doorstep. The built environment plays the key role here and we need to work hard to make other sectors realise that sport plays an integral part in everyday life.

What type(s) of participation should be encouraged and how should they be measured?

YMCA feels that greater emphasis should be given to grass roots participation across a multitude of sports and that a simple message needs to frame the importance of doing something, no matter what that something is. Yes a pathway from grass roots through to competitive sport and elite level sport is important but to have a greater impact on participation across the population we need to recognise the trend and desire for people dipping in and out of different sports.

As alluded to in the previous question we believe that participation in the traditional sporting offer is constrained and out dated. Regular participation is important but that participation does not need to be in a single sport and so the offer should encourage more relaxed, lower skill level involvement in multiple activities. We still believe the need to challenge the acceptance that people need a certain ability level to get involved. This is not the case and messages need to concentrate on communicating this. A good recent example being the 'This Girl Can' campaign which focused on 'normal' women taking part in a multitude of sports at a variety of levels.

Again, through consultation with young people, YMCA knows that they want a multi-sport offer. They know that if they want to become proficient and compete in a particular sport then they can generally access this through existing clubs and structures. What they are asking for is the ability to try different things at different times without the need to invest time in developing skill or money in buying equipment. Again this leads us to a more relaxed, informal attitude to sport.

How can we specifically target under-represented groups?

People become involved in sport because of people. That might be a sports star that they aspire to be or it might be a friend, family or community member that they can relate to and connect with. To address lower participation rates amongst under represented groups we need to work with individuals who have the power to connect, motivate and inspire others. This does not necessarily have to mean a sporting superstar, it might mean a local community leader, shop owner or youth group leader who has the connections, respect and reach in to their local community. YMCA believes in the power of community champions and community groups over and above parachuting in paid professionals to neighbourhoods that they don't understand. As previously mentioned, people and local communities face their own pressures and barriers and it is only those local people that can fully understand this and are therefore best placed support people to overcome these barriers.

We would recommend resourcing and supporting local people and local communities to make a difference in their neighbourhoods. A sports leader does not necessarily need to have a level 3 coaching qualification. What they do need is enthusiasm and an understanding of how to facilitate a safe sporting offer, and access to resources and equipment to help them deliver. Can an equipment bank be set up in local libraries, shops and supermarkets which allows people to check out skateboards, footballs, tennis ball and bibs no matter the time of day.

We believe that an offer that aims to engage under represented groups needs to be delivered by under represented groups in their own communities albeit supported by existing structures.

How can we maximise the potential of new technology to increase participation?

There is a plethora of sport, health and fitness apps available. Whilst this provides choice it also creates confusion and the potential for wrong messages to be pedalled. There are no safeguards for the type of information or advice that some of these apps give. The successful ones are linked to global brands that have the resources and reach and create a desire amongst their target audience to be involved. The potential here is for the public sector to link with these established apps to create campaigns, communicate messages and access data. The public sector should not look to compete in this sector, rather try and engage and work together to take advantage of the skills of the established set ups.

Where there has also been some success is using technology to provide fingertip access to local class timetables, online booking etc. There is the thought that this is the tip of the iceberg and investment should be given over to resourcing the development of this area, allowing people to view, book and pay for sport via their smartphones.

The data sources mentioned provide the opportunity to analyse trends that can be taken advantage of to advance the current offer and therefore increase participation. For example:

- * Apps such as strava, garmin connect and mapmyrun/ride allow for the most popular cycling, running and walking routes to be analysed. Is there the opportunity to improve the areas where these take place by investing in better lighting, safe cycle ways, better signage etc.

- * Personal recording of activity will inform us of the most popular times for people of different demographics to take part. Can we use this to increase accessibility. For example, do most younger users participate immediately from the school gates, or do most parents participate early morning on a weekend. Can we increase provision during these times.

- * Can we analyse the data from these apps to determine seasonal activities and respond accordingly.

How can we use the power of sport to achieve broader positive social outcomes and whether some funding should specifically be spent for that purpose?

YMCA believes in the involvement of any positive activity and its link to social outcomes. However, this is often difficult to quantify and often expert research agencies are needed to provide the evidence. This is expensive and requires a commitment from the provider, who often doesn't understand the area of work and so will not engage. The way in which we record the outcomes and output of sport should be developed further so we answer the question of 'so what.' We can relatively easily report on the numbers of people participating and how often they take part. Those that believe in sport know the benefits of that participation but we need to preach to the unconverted. We need to speak to them in their own language. We need to the support of those in the research sector to help create easily applied frameworks which allow the participant or the lay deliverer to be able to capture this data. We do not believe that more resources should be given to sports providers to encourage the capture of social outcomes. This is not their expertise. We believe that the role here is to support working between expert research agencies and sports researchers.

YMCA are looking at implementing the 40 developmental assets in to its sport, health and wellbeing services. This will allow us to demonstrate the longer term social impact of our work not just report on the numbers of people we work with. Ultimately we believe that sport helps individuals to develop people in mind, body and spirit and this in turns leads to increased chance of employment, decrease in risky healthy

behaviours, reduction in offending and an increase in positive relationships including marriage. We would be very interested in being involved in any subsequent work that may be given over to this area.

Theme 2: Physical Activity

How can we use the reach and influence of the sport sector to get more people active, especially those who have been inactive for a long time?

The terms 'Sport' and 'Physical Activity' mean different things to different people. Typically the term sport can turn people off. It can bring back bad experiences. It may have been reinforced to them that they are 'not sporty' and so believe that sport is not for them. Sport involved wearing shorts or tight fitting clothing, getting hot and sweaty, becoming physically uncomfortable. But it doesn't have to. There are enough sports out there for anyone to participate in and if we are to target the inactive we need to realise that we can frame sports in different ways. Some adapted sports have been successful and more time should be given over to creating alternative ways of playing the sports that everyone recognises or connects to (walking football being a good example).

We need to act on the insight showing what resonates with the inactive. Is it sport for health, sport to reduce isolation, sport for charity. Through various sporting programmes we know that people generally do not jump from being inactive to participating 3-4 times a week. Typically the inactive will move to once a week, those participating twice a week will move to three times a week and so on. We need to frame the message that makes people realise the 'something is better than nothing.'

We also need to create a clearer message about the impact of sports participation. Why would someone want to get involved in sport if they don't want to become an Olympic athlete (or at least competitive and proficient). We need to be clearer and more concise about the physical, mental and social benefits. Of course all that information is already out there but is it accessible and packaged in a way that a lay person will understand. This is not helped by all the conflicting information that is presented in the media. We need to create an attractive, reliable and valid information source and marketing campaign that makes people want access it and makes them feel confident that they are receiving accurate information. Good strides have been made here but there is more that can be done.

How can we specifically target the different health outcomes that physical activity can deliver, including how they can contribute to preventing or treating diabetes, obesity, dementia and mental health problems?

As deliverers of commissioned health and wellbeing projects, including interventions to reduce inactivity, YMCA feels that first there should be better understanding and

training across health professionals of the importance of sport physical activity. It should not be right that a GP can complete their medical training without a specific element of their education focussing on the positive impact that physical activity has on both physical and mental health. Advocating that physical activity is part of the General Medical Services (GMS) contract, not just as part of a pathway for combating cardiovascular disease or hypertension for example. We still don't have a high enough percentage of health professionals accepting and advocating the role that physical activity can play in the prevention and treatment of illnesses. Acceptance from the general population on the role that sport can play wider health issues will come from support from trusted medical professionals more so than any other medium.

How can we raise awareness of the UK Chief Medical Officers' guidelines on physical activity (2.5 hours of moderate intensity activity over a week for adults) and ensure our interventions enable more people to meet them?

YMCA believes that we should consider simplifying the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) guidelines on physical activity (or at least have simpler public facing guidelines supported by the existing quantifiable guidelines). Whilst these guidelines may often be communicated to the public by professionals they should be aimed and understood by everyone. Currently the use of words such as 'vigorous', 'moderate' and 'aerobic' present a barrier to a lay person understanding exactly what is required and also the guidelines still suggest that they are talking about 'hot and sweaty' sports or activity. Ultimately we want everyone to do more physical activity. We want the inactive to be active and we generally want the active to be more active. For the lay person we simply need them to understand that doing anything over and above what they are doing already is going to be of benefit. For the more engaged and committed we can still then refer on to the existing guidelines.

How can we ensure that the different government departments and sports delivery bodies work together as effectively as possible?

We would encourage the investigation in to how the current GMS Contract impacts on the attitudes of clinical professionals towards sport and physical activity and whether there are any perverse incentives that negatively impact on the prescription and attitudes to sport and PA.

Ultimately, as budgets have moved in to CCG control it will be important that we work with them to build the business case for sport and physical activity, showing how commissioning PA interventions will make a return on investment. Joint working here will be key, so we can provide the information and robustness that is provided by the clinical groups.

From a sport and PA profession point of view it would be interesting to see the value of REPs membership and the CPD of people working in the sector to ensure that those on the front line are sufficiently trained to accurately and confidently convey the importance of sport and PA.

YMCA truly believes that sport and physical activity is a cross sector issue, involving all those agencies referenced above. We also believe that this has not yet been fully recognised by those outside of our own industry, despite the evidence base. For those not fully engaged, they are unlikely to search the evidence base and so we need to produce easily available information, advocacy documents and information portals that frame the argument in their own language. For schools, let's spell it out to them that an increase in sport and physical activity amongst their pupils will result in better behaviour in class, increased levels of concentration, higher achieving pupils and better educational results. Let's show PE teachers that sport is not difficult to teach or encourage, that it can be supported in active travel or lunch breaks.

For business let's make it clear to them that active employees are take less days off sick and are more productive when they are at work. That investing in employee health will yield a return. We need to present the figures in hard facts and how it is going to affect their bottom line as well as how it can support their corporate social responsibility. We need to show them how they can support their employees to become more physically active and present case studies from the private sector that resonate with them.

Theme 3: Children and Young People

How can we make the sporting offer for children and young people outside of school and school hours as attractive and accessible as possible?

Through consultation with young people on our Young Health Champions programme we know that those aged 16-25 want to do more sport and physical activity in the future. Where and how this activity occurs varies amongst them but there is a desire for it to be less formal and more fun.

The reasons given behind the desire to do more sport and physical activity were focussed on a few specific areas; the majority said it was to increase fitness, improve health or managing weight. Over half the respondents cited participating in sport or physical activity was done so to meet people or to have fun and the other area was to train for an event or improve skill.

As a result of the consultation, YMCA makes the following recommendations.

1. Overcome the perceived financial barrier young people face when joining sports clubs
 - a. Young people believe that membership costs and additional expenditure to participating in sport or physical activity will mean they are not be able to take part.
 - b. Reduced and trial memberships alongside induction and open days would encourage more young people to join community sports clubs.

2. Reduce access barriers for young people to join community sports clubs
 - a. Clubs which are accessible for young people will have a greater membership and active involvement.
 - b. The clubs need to be within accessible travelling distances and where they are not; good transportation links must be available.
 - c. Sessions should be run at appropriate times for young people, after school/work and weekends, but clubs should also seek consultation from young people about what times are appropriate for them in their area.
 - d. There should be the opportunity to take part in non-traditional venues, settings that young people are familiar with and where they feel comfortable.
 - e. Offering a buddy scheme whereby an existing member of the club agreed to meet new members 15 minutes before the start of the session and partner that new member for the session was highlighted as an excellent way of overcoming a perceived lack of confidence

3. Multi-sport clubs are preferred to single sport clubs by young people
 - a. After an explanation and discussion on the merits of both multi-sports and single sports clubs two thirds of the young people preferred multi-sports.
 - b. Multi-sport clubs allowed young people to try different sports in a less formal and competitive environment. Thus being more fun, sociable and helping to build confidence.
 - d. The offer should be more than just sport and should allow young people to participate or access cross over activities such as music and socialising