

Olly Deasy, Francesca Clarke and Lily MaCaulay-Hick – Written evidence (NPS0048)

Executive Summary:

The paper is written in a reflective manner by two 6th form pupils at Cranford House School. The two female pupils discuss areas of sport that they have experienced in 'real life'. They share obstacles they have faced and potential solutions that they believe would increase participation. The main areas they have focused on are: opportunities for females within sport, competitive Vs recreational sport, media influence, coaching standards and the gap between state and private school sport.

- 1.) How can children and young people be encouraged to participate in sport and recreation both at school and outside school, and lead an active lifestyle? If possible, share examples of success stories and good practice, and challenges faced.

Splitting of Sexes in School Sport

Reflective:

For young people entering sports and fitness, there is a large image surrounding what is suitable for each gender. This can be discouraging for people when it comes to challenging the stereo types. In mixed schools there is a strong sense of social acceptability and part of that includes whether or not you conform to the stereotypes. Take away that need to fit in and conform, and people will be much more likely to give things a go they otherwise wouldn't. This is very true about sports in particular. Before I moved to an all-girls school I was at a Co-Ed school which had mixed PE classes. This was great for the few of the girls who had high confidence and sporting abilities, but was not so good for the remaining majority. Doing sports with the boys reduced our confidence as we felt self-conscious and as though we didn't have the right to join in, especially in male dominated sports such as football and rugby.

Moving to an all-girls school changed that for me completely. I felt like I had more confidence and was able to try new things. In my opinion this was down to having an all-girls PE class, so when we were told to play a sport like football there was no worries about whether or not that was ok and if we should just let the boys "get on with it".

Strategy to implement:

Creating sports teams/ groups of the same gender would reinforce the message that the sport is for you, not just on gender. In doing this I think more people would be motivated to get stuck in and involved in the game. Also having a mixed coaching staff would reinforce a positive image to all young people that everyone should be keeping active.

Competitive vs recreational:

Reflective:

For people who are new to sports, the whole competitive concept can be daunting and off putting. Schools as a majority provide more competitive sports than recreational. This is also very much the case outside of the education system. There is a real challenge in finding a recreational and social sports club for young people and this I think impacts the statistics of active young people.

Strategy to implement:

Introducing school teams that are recreational and have a reduced amount of pressure towards commitment and things like that. The same goes for out of education system clubs. This would help introduce more people into sport without the pressure of having to be a certain standard or commit to something big. These clubs would also need to be financially freezable and have an open ethos, otherwise you reduce the demographic it's attracting.

Opportunities

Strategy

Their school can try and provide as many opportunities as possible. This can be through extracurricular clubs which they will enjoy. If you get children involved at a younger age, then they will want to keep playing throughout the rest of their childhood if they enjoy it. This is why it's important that they have a positive experience when they play which can be done by getting their friends to participate with them or by making the activities fun. If it's made fun by coaches, then younger children will be encouraged to participate.

Lots of taster days for different sports during school and outside of school can also encourage them as they will have the opportunity to try lots of different sports. Also if you get organisations to go to schools it will encourage people to join them outside of school as they will already know the coaches and people from their school will join in as well. Building links and partnerships with organisations is a key component of ensuring that this works.

2.) How can adults of all ages and backgrounds, particularly those from under-represented groups, including women and girls, ethnic minorities, disabled people, older people, and those from less affluent backgrounds, be encouraged to lead more active lifestyles? If possible, share examples of success stories and good practice, and challenges faced.

Media

Reflective

Our world is heavily affected by the media and it can help shape the lives of younger people. Women and girls are being discouraged by the media to take part in certain sports as they can be seen as 'too weak to play' or not good enough. This makes young girls growing up dislike or even hate sports because they don't want people to view them as playing a male sport. This could all be

changed by introducing positive role models through the media which creates someone for young girls and women to aspire to be like. This could be someone who performs at the highest level and who got there even with a lot of factors working against her.

As a young girl growing up, I was encouraged to participate in many sports but I never found one that I really enjoyed until I tried cricket at my school. We were shown lots of women and men who were playing for England at the time and that inspired me to take up the sport. Back then women's cricket was just beginning to get recognition but before that lesson I hardly knew what cricket was as I never grew up playing it at school or with my friends. This shows how important the media is in encouraging younger children, especially now.

Strategy

Showing that participating in sports can be fun is another way to interest young girls and women. If you get friends to join together then they will encourage more of their friends to join as well. Providing a safe place where they can go and participate in a sport will allow them to play together and get to know other people as well. This is great for their social, mental and physical wellbeing.

You could also give discounted or free lessons to people from a less affluent background to make the sports more accessible to everyone. Even providing equipment for them can encourage them to play especially in sports where you need a lot of equipment like cricket and Ice hockey. One of my friends in my cricket team wasn't able to afford a bag and pads so even though she was very talented she had to borrow people's kit every game. This meant that she couldn't train on her own which affected her performance. Our county managed to spare a bag and pads and gave them to her so that she could keep on playing and even got picked for Middlesex this year. This shows that even if you're not from an affluent background you should still be allowed to participate.

Schools provide sports to young people, but there is a lack of social clubs outside of the education system. The state schools also have reduced funding and as a result have reduced numbers of coaches or coaches with less experience.

Lack of out of education system social clubs:

Reflective:

There is a big lack of social clubs aimed at under-represented groups. Sports clubs tend to be exclusive and involve a fee to join. This eliminates a huge amount of people who would otherwise get involved. A lot of clubs are also single-sex and have age limitations.

Strategies to implement:

Introducing community led clubs, which are inclusive and have low to non-joining fees. In doing this the number of clubs w

State and private school sectors funding for coaches:

Reflective:

Both state and private school sectors provide physical education, however it is not going to be at the same standard. Private schools have the funding to create

an experienced and highly skilled coaching team to provide to the pupils, however state schools may not all have this level of funding. This means the coaches may be less experienced and the department may be less well funded.

Strategies to implement:

Increased funding to schools coaching would improve the level of awareness students have about the importance of keeping fit and active.

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