

Phil Martin – Written evidence (NPS0092)

My role within Better Gosling Sport park is to manage the tennis outreach programme and engage with all areas of the local community and to use tennis as a way to get people active. We do a lot of work within the primary schools, colleges, with disabled people and groups as well as trying to engage with all areas of the community to get new people active using tennis. I am now also in a role to help develop these areas across Hertfordshire for Herts LTA.

I strongly believe sport plays an important role not just in physical health but also mental health and all areas of the community can hugely benefit from being more active and be being brought together.

- 1. How can local delivery, including funding structures of sport and recreation be improved to ensure that people of all ages and abilities are able to live an active lifestyle? For example, how successfully do local authorities and other bodies such as Active Partnerships, Leisure Trusts, Local Sports clubs and charities work together, and how, might coordination be improved?*

From my experience when a group of these bodies work closely together the best results are achieved and the most impact is made on reaching the chosen group. The example of this been successful was on a disability project working with day-care centres. The county's active partnership was very much involved and lead on the project but a number of local sports and clubs were part of the planning and shaping of the project as well as key members of the day-care centres. What was important was identifying a key person from each organisation and them driving and leading from their area to ensure the project worked on all sides.

In my opinion this needs to be done more frequently and with closer and more regular communication between key people across the selected bodies. The better the relationships the more likely key groups of people will be reached and given the chance of an active lifestyle. The active partnerships will play a big role in this as they have the information and ability to build the contacts and relationships from all sides.

Key way to improve coordination is ensuring there is identified individuals from the key organisations all communicating regularly and working together to get people active. Getting the key people together in the same room is key to forming these relationships.

- 2. 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.*

For children and young people, I believe schools are the best place to engage them with sports and give them the exposure to as many different experiences as possible.

For this to happen and where over the years I have seen the best examples of children playing tennis more has been when there has been support from the School Games Organisers and using their contacts to help sports clubs build that initial contact with the teachers/schools and allow taster sessions to take place within the school environment.

The key I have then found to children continuing to play and been active is to set up regular sessions within the school either before or after school hours. This takes away any transport issues and makes it accessible to play and they feel comfortable as they know the environment and are amongst friends.

The follow on to this is then set up opportunities for them to come and try the sport at the local club in sessions specifically for their school (this can be current or new sessions) but what is important it is with the coach that has delivered the sessions at school so again they feel comfortable and hopefully be alongside friends and people they know. This then ensures the social aspect is valued right from the start. These link sessions to the club have worked best with an incentive such as a racket and ball included that they can keep as this then strengthens the link to the sport and they can play outside of the sessions. An initial monetary offer/discount can also help as an initial incentive.

As said above the main challenge we have always found is the initial contact and communication to schools so that aspect of the process would be really key to opening up more opportunities.

When working with Special education needs schools, we have the best results in keeping the children active and engaged over a period of time is to follow on the curriculum delivery sessions with lunchtime clubs. Before and afters school clubs were harder for the pupils to attend due to transport and so the lunchtime offer worked better. We have then found from this pupils who attended for periods of time have then played out of the school environment either with parents or joined club sessions at their local clubs.

One other area that could be improved/developed to help children play more externally is sports clubs and school sport curriculum providers working closer together. School sport curriculum providers do a great job of delivery within schools but then from my experience don't link with local clubs who can then provide a further pathway into that sport. There has been a feel of conflict sometimes between the two and I don't think that needs to be the case. A closer relationship can work for both organisations and the end goal would be more opportunities for children to be active.

- 3. 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.*

As an organisation working in particularly with disabled adults but also adults from other underrepresented groups the key to getting them active regularly is ensuring there is a focus and importance put on the social aspect and giving them meet like a place to play and meet with others where they feel welcomed and comfortable. This is achieved from the coach to be welcoming within the session but also before and after the session them being welcomed by other members and encouraged to use the facilities. This is achieved by working with club committees and ensuring they understand the importance of this side in getting new players into the game.

An example of this have been:

Our wheelchair group attend weekly sessions and after will stay and have lunch in the café together but know the café staff and feel welcomed each week. Another one of our wheelchair players who plays regularly joins other club players for lunch and is very much part of the club. They also have a group WhatsApp that they communicate between sessions with and that build a further connection with the sessions and keeps them attending and being active.

Another example and this was with older players who also had disabilities was to run the session alongside a coffee and cake morning. The participants then had the social benefits before and after the session as well as been active.

We have also found that initial engagement with disabled groups in their environment is a really positive way to get people playing. We run programmes where we deliver 6 weeks of sessions at a group's venue be it a community centre or a day care centre and then a follow on 6 weeks back at the club/centre. We have managed in the past to find funding for these 12 sessions and then groups pay to cover costs to carry the sessions on. Another benefit is working with groups already formed gets more people playing and is affordable and sustainable for both clubs/coaches and the participants.

We have found that working alongside other sports and offering multi sports options either on days or rotations can be a really good way of engaging people who are not active as it gives them a variety and different opportunities. We have offered young disabled adults' days where they play football, tennis and rugby and had great take up.

I also believe identifying key people from these underrepresented groups who are already active in a sport and for them to communicate and encourage others to join them. They are able to show the benefits and are more likely to have success in getting people active. If they can then also be present at the sessions this also then is great way of making people feel comfortable when first turning up and engaging in the sessions.

- 4. Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation, the Government's 2015 sports strategy, outlines five outcome priorities: physical health, mental health, individual development, social and community development and economic development. Are these the right priorities*

and how successful has the government been in measuring and delivering these outcomes to date?

We base a lot of programme on trying to impact these areas and so I agree these are important areas to priorities and focus on.

It would be great to see more emphasis put on the social and community development as from experience this is a major factor in getting people active and continuing to be active as it gives the community more than just sports participation it gives them a sense of belonging and togetherness.

5. Is government capturing an accurate picture of how people participate in sport and recreation activities in its data collection? How could this be improved?

My main focus of disability and I believe the recording process is very accurate with regular recording sent through to our NGB 3 times per year and so the Government is getting a correct picture what is going on in that area of sport.

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10. Should there be a national plan for sport and recreation? Why/why not?

I believe it would be beneficial for there to be a national plan for sport and recreation and for a strategy to be laid out on how organisations can work together to increase opportunities for all areas of the community to be more active. This would give a structure for areas to follow and key local people from all bodies identified to drive it forward.

As stated earlier the more sports work together in partnerships the greater the success I believe will be achieved in getting more people active and getting the benefits of sport.

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