

Hayley Lever – Written evidence (NPS0137)

1. There are so many influences on how much people move, and engage in physical activity or sport. Moving has been designed out of life, and we need to design it back in: addressing influences from culture, policy, the physical environment, service and system design and delivery and much more.

The key is to enable people to engage in moving, physical activity and sport in ways that suit their needs and circumstances, and remove all barriers to engagement.

Diversity of opportunity and offer in communities is a strength, not a weakness. There is no one size fits all approach, and the desire to co-ordinate (and control?) isn't always helpful. It can result in energy being put into places and work that is unnecessary and doesn't account for the way that people and communities live their lives.

Most local areas have diverse and ever changing sector....in a typical Active Partnership area (county) there are a myriad of sports clubs, voluntary groups, schools, facilities offering opportunities, and that's something we should seek to grow. Active Partnerships, local authorities, CVS's and other organisations when at their best, are working together to support, grow and oil the wheels of effective local delivery by a diverse range of providers. When this system works well, relationships are strong and trusted. Communication is open and free flowing, barriers and blockages to change are removed. Honest conversations take place about what is getting in the way of change, and people work together with people and communities as their focus. They listen to the voices of the people in their communities, and work with them to make change happen.

Of course, it can look and feel complex and fragmented, but if the culture, ways of working, systems, investment and support are working well, it feels smooth and easy to make things happen. There is a great deal of learning about this in Greater Manchester, in day to day life in our communities, through our local pilot work and wider whole system approaches to active lives.

We need to ensure we're asking ourselves the right question about what makes change happen and supports active lives- and a focus on 'co-ordination' isn't necessarily the one we need to be asking. If we are growing a social movement and focussed on culture change, then enabling all parts of the system to play their part, easily and effectively and tackling inequalities through their approach is critical. We need to embrace the complexity, not try to control or co-ordinate it.

With Sport England and other national agencies increasingly adopting a place-based approach, we are confident this work can be strengthened further in the coming years, and this should be further encouraged.

2. If system change is about shifting the conditions holding a problem in place, in this case, the 'problem' we have is that moving has been designed out of children's lives. A lack of engagement in sport and recreation is a byproduct of the cultural and systemic conditions we have created.

'Encouraging' children and young people is in this sense, not the most helpful way of looking at it. We need to design moving, physical activity and sport back into life- shifting culture, mindsets, our public narrative.

We need to change the conversation and our collective worldview- listen and understand the realities of our young people's lives and do everything in our collective power to shift culture and design moving into modern life.

We need to ensure that all our policies, strategies and practice support and enable active lives and tackle inequalities. This requires us to move beyond 'encouraging' people, as if population scale movement is down to children's/young people's individual motivation or desire to engage. There are more powerful forces at play, and the longer we try to tackle the problem of activity with an individualist approach, we will continue to fail.

We need to move from seeing individual components to seeing things more holistically. There are a myriad of factors that influence children/young people's engagement. We need to work as a system to hear children's voices, understand these influences, and develop approaches that enable culture change, system change and behavior change – to support their engagement.

At a national level, we don't need a new sport and recreation strategy, as Uniting the Movement offers what we need. What we **do** need is a cross governmental approach that ensures that education policy, transport policy, housing policy, planning, urban design, and our organizational practices, systems and workforces all support and enable active lives.

In terms of more formal sport and recreation, we need organisations that understand and respond to the culture, lives and needs of our young people. Moving, physical activity and sport have to be fun, engaging, desirable, easy to engage with, at times and in places and spaces that are local and appealing. Communications need to speak to young people in ways that make sense to them and activity/sport have to win, in the competition for their time, attention and energy.

We have seen widening inequalities in participation due to covid, and some trends emerging that are worth paying attention to, in the data on children and young people. The sport and physical activity sector needs to respond to the insight that is showing us new ways that children want to engage.

All of this needs to account for that fact that children and young people are not one homogenous group. They are diverse, have different personality types and mindsets. What engages one, will not engage another, which is why we absolutely need a diverse 'offer' at neighbourhood and locality scale, that people can engage with. Tastes, interests, needs and lives change over time and circumstance, so as our CYP move through life, the sport and recreation offer needs to offer them what they need.

3. Most of the points made about children and young people, above, apply in this context too. We need to design moving, physical activity and sport back in to modern life, in our communities, our workplaces and social contexts. To address inequalities in active lives, we also need to address structural inequalities in society as a whole. The determinants of activity are the same as the determinants of many other characteristics of wellbeing and health. In a more equal society, we will we have more equal engagement in physical activity and sport.

We need to take action to directly address existing gaps in active lives (and any further widening of those gaps or new gaps forming) for specific demographic

groups affected, including disabled people; people with long term health conditions; people of African, Caribbean, South Asian or East Asian heritage and other minority ethnic groups; people living in poverty or on low incomes (LSEG). And gaps where and when they exist that are based on sex or gender, age, sexuality or postcode.

This needs to be informed by a tapestry of qualitative and quantitative disaggregated data and insight, with an honest appraisal of weaknesses and gaps in our evidence base and with full recognition that many people experience intersectional inequalities and multiple disadvantage. This requires layering the multiple lenses for an intersectional perspective.

We need to take an honest look at what isn't working for some people, fully acknowledging the realities of people's lives and work with people, in all their diversity, but especially those who've historically been under-represented in the decision-making and design.

By continually re-examining how we support people to live more active lives, as a 'sport and physical sector' and as a whole system, from the perspective of each of the different protected characteristics, and socio-economic groupings and with an understanding of geographic and place-based disparities and inequalities.

This all requires diverse leadership throughout the system from board to community level.

Decisions should be made as close to the people impacted as possible, adopting the principle of subsidiarity with resources and power distributed to across the places, spaces and networks with the greatest understanding, relationships and proximity to target audiences

Solutions should be co-designed and co-produced, apply the principle - 'Nothing about us/for us without us'. We must co-design the solutions with people, being prepared to make significant changes to what we currently have in place. This means moving beyond language and models of 'including' people in current structures, towards dismantling structures that aren't working for people because they were designed without them in mind.

A marmot approach to everything from priority setting to investment, to capacity and leadership... need to work out with partners what a marmot approach looks like in practice.

To influence and advocate across the system for moving more to be designed back into people's lives in a way which is inclusive of different people's needs and the realities of their lives. Structurally designing physical activity in at every opportunity to the planning of homes, streets, neighbourhoods, services, towns, cities, transport infrastructure. Encouraging others across the system to also adopt a more targeted approach to ensure resources are allocated to where most needed.

Promoting good practice minimum requirements to ensure places, spaces, programmes and opportunities are consistently designed for diversity.

We all need to grow more diverse and representative leadership - increasing advocacy and representation from underrepresented groups at all layers of the sector and system. Increasing diversity of community champions and role models, and relevance of imagery, language – understand 'you can't be what you can't see'. Need to do more to ensure 'offer' is relevant to people – for people like you in places you occupy.

We need to increase people's understanding and awareness across the whole workforce of what it is and what it takes. Leaders working in ways that align to this, in everything they do. Developing workforce skills, confidence, reflection, to lead, dismantle, shift, honestly reflect, share power and resource differently. Equipping workforce with skills to listen, engage, include, co-design and co-produce.

Continue to influence and embed understanding of inequalities in physical activity across system architecture and policy – tackling inequalities and increasing active lives need to be jointly embedded in whole system policy – everyone's business.

This takes time – need speed and pace but not haste. We need to be honest about the scale of the challenge and honest along the journey about what is helping and what is getting in the way. Become anti-fragile in response to failure to get it right.

Go deeper, over a longer more sustained period.

4. These are the right priorities. The evidence exists to support the fact that these outcomes will be achieved, if we support active lives and tackle inequalities. We don't need to keep measuring this at a programme or project level, which currently looks more to measure outputs rather than outcomes (due to short term interventions and an over-reliance on traditional research methods). We need to focus our time, resources and efforts on creating the conditions for change... not re-proving what we already know to be true.

We also need to make sure that we measure what really matters. The adage that we may hit the target but miss the point, is an important one. We could set a target for active lives data and hit it, whilst leaving behind growing inequalities in those groups least engaged.

In addition return on investment is an important measure, but insufficient on its own, as much of the value from sport and physical activity can't be monetised. We also need to be mindful of where and to whom does the benefit of a more active society fall? Its *people and communities* who need the benefits, and the return on investment to the NHS, public purse and the economy more widely, will follow. This requires a big commitment to health and wealth creation approach, with prevention at its heart.

5. Active lives data is really useful, but it isn't everything we need it to be, yet. We have real challenges with understanding what is going on at hyper local level, and with particular demographic groups, which would be important to address.

We have gaps in disaggregated data, insight and research at national, regional and local levels make it difficult to ensure resources are smartly targeted to

where most needed to have greatest impact in terms of narrowing the gaps. We need to pool data and insight between partners working across the system. Spend time listening to people to understand complexities and nuances, and share stories with DCMS to show the impact on real people with complex lives.

We're always looking for ways of capturing movement data in real time, and have periodically explored the possibility of monthly household surveys (too expensive), digital approaches to tracking (too expensive and can't get access to population data from those that have it)

There is also very little information about the workforce interface with participants in the data we collect at the moment. We don't know where people are active, and what the role of the workforce is to support this. This is a massive gap in knowledge in terms of starting to understand the role of a frontline workforce in supporting people to lead more active lives.

6. In order to tackle these issues in sport, we have to tackle them in wider society. Those working in the sport system need to show leadership, become more assertive in our approach to these issues. All of us – from government to community organisations and individuals need to serve as allies and as advocates in tackling racism, homophobia, misogyny and ableism in sport. To do this, we need to be educated, informed, confident and supported to develop a strong collective voice.

We need leadership from government in everything they do- cross governmental approaches to tackling these issues through legislation, policy and practice.

There is a workforce role here. However, much like the different forms of abuse we don't fully understand the scale of the problem when it comes to harm to participants. There are lots of reasons for this but we must first acknowledge that there is a problem and recognise that there are opportunities and space for the sector and those within it to improve the approach to risk management and mitigation in order to better protect participants from harm. Whilst there is a wider societal role, beyond our direct control, we can as a sector make it harder for people with discriminatory views and behaviours to work in our sector, and this requires the sector to take responsibility, to learn from adverse events to ensure improvements can be made across different layers of the system (sector, organisational, supervisory, preconditions).

Whilst not having space to repeat the messages in here, we have talked with and are very supportive of the approach and messages of Women in Sport, Kick it Out and Activity Alliance on this agenda.

7. Similarly to question 6 as a sector we need to acknowledge that harm to participants continues to occur in sport and physical activity in a variety of ways, situations and contexts. We also know that there is likely to be an under reporting of the true extent of the problem due to a lack of prevalence data. Instead we are reliant on indicators.

It is important to note that the Independent Duty of Care Review in Sport was published nearly 4 years ago (April 2017) and to date the recommendations from this report have not been adopted by the sector. In the meantime, we have seen numerous examples where duty of care is not as effective as it could be.

This is not to say there is not good work taking place to act on reports of harm and to prevent individuals from deliberately or accidentally causing or contributing to harm but we believe there are opportunities and space for the sector and those within it to improve the approach to risk management and mitigation in order to better protect participants from harm. This is highlighted by both the policy context (e.g. Sporting Future acknowledged the need to improve duty of care) and the multiple lessons from reported failures.

Examining other sectors and countries tells us that by segmenting the issues (ref cross over the Q6) into different types of harm, the bigger picture (common issues) may be missed. Many academics have noted that sport has been slow to consider the broader holistic approach to non-sexual welfare concerns. Prevention of sexual exploitation of children remains the dominant narrative, albeit other forms of harm are more prevalent. In our sector, there has not yet been a systemic reflection.

We are aware of work by CIMSPA, Sport England and UK Sport to examine a more systematic approach to ensure that participants have access to safer, quality experiences and there is a reduction in workforce-related risk of harm to participants.

8. The key issues for professional and elite sport, in our context, is one of leadership, inclusion, diversity, tackling the issues highlighted in Q6, and using the power of sport to shape stronger people, communities and society. There is a big leadership and governance need in this strand of work.
9. The ISPAH interventions that work, refreshed in 2020 are a useful starting point to explore this. This is drawn from international evidence, and takes a holistic approach, including active travel and design to create active environments. These 'investments' of time, resource, capacity and attention, are a useful starting point for a whole system approach to active lives- albeit seen through the lenses described above- to ensure we address inequalities.
10. Tuesday saw the launch of Uniting the Movement, by Sport England. This strategy has been codesigned with leaders and communities across the country, and provides the strategic direction and approach we need to address all of the points above. We do not need another national strategy, in our view. What we need now, is for everyone in the ecosystem to coalesce around the shared purpose that it describes, working to the principles and values it sets out, and to work collaboratively

There is a need to move into action now, and operationalise the national strategy, not to start consulting on another one.

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