

Cross-Party Group on Sport

14th December 2023, 1pm-2pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Liz Smith MSP
Jeremy Balfour MSP
Tess White MSP
Brian Whittle MSP

Non-MSP Group Members

Kim Atkinson, Scottish Sports Association
David Black, Children 1st
Rhiannon Butterfield, Scottish Curling
Jane Campbell Morrison, SAAF
Liz Carlin, University of West of Scotland
Barry Cawte, Scottish Hockey
Richard Davison, University of West of Scotland
Malcolm Dingwall-Smith, sportscotland
Joanne Devit, CPG on Disability
Margaret Ellis, CPG on Disability
Stew Fowlie, Scottish Student Sport
Mark Gaffney, Scottish Disability Sport
Gary Grieve, Scottish ClubSport
Mike Harrison, CPG on Disability
Rick Kenney, Scottish ClubSport
Gemma Lumsdaine, University of West of Scotland
Jamie Mack, Scottish Sports Association
Gavin Macleod, Scottish Disability Sport
Donna Martin, Children 1st
Gillian McEllroy, University of West of Scotland
Maureen McGonigle, Scottish Women in Sport
Gayle McPherson, University of West of Scotland
Gavin McWhinnie, Office of Liz Smith MSP
Dougie Millen, Scottish Sports Futures
Gregor Muir, Scottish Sports Association
Tanith Muller, Parkinson's UK Scotland
Laura Pilkington, Scottish Disability Sport
Lyn Pornaro, CPG on Disability
Karen Procek, CPG on Disability
Fiona Reid, Bayfirth Research and OSS

Gillian Sefton, Scottish Auto Cycle Union
Julia Shillitto, Office of Jeremy Balfour MSP
Duncan Sinclair, Aberdeen Sports Village
Margarita Sweeney-Baird, Inclusive Skating
Steve Walsh, High Life Highland
Ronan Welch, Scottish Rowing
Gavin Yates, CPG on Disability

Apologies

Clare Adamson MSP
Fraser Calderwood, Leisure and Culture Dundee
Laura Cowan, RYA Scotland
Liza Linton, RYA Scotland
Joan O'Sullivan, Swimtime
Sue Webber MSP

Agenda item 1

Matters arising

Approval of minutes of 12th June 2023 meeting

- Proposer, Jeremy Balfour MSP
- Secunder, Stew Fowlie, Scottish Student Sport

Minutes approved

It was noted that the New Year UK Honours would be announced on Friday 29th December and for attendees to look out for recipients from Scottish sport and to consider individuals for nomination in future rounds.

Agenda item 2

AGM business

Election of Office Bearers

The following were all re-standing for nomination:

Convener: Liz Smith (LS) MSP (Conservative)

Proposed by Kim Atkinson (KA)

Co-Deputy Conveners: Jeremy Balfour MSP (Conservative), Clare Adamson MSP (SNP)

Proposed by KA

Group Officers: Carol Mochan MSP (Labour) and Brian Whittle MSP (Conservative)

Proposed by KA

Secretariat: Scottish Sports Association (SSA)

Proposed by LS

All nominations were passed.

Agenda item 3

Topic for this meeting: Disability sport in Scotland

LS introduced the discussion by recognising that some of the biggest benefits to health and wellbeing could be found for those who currently face some of the most significant barriers to accessing physical activity, including people with disabilities.

Recognised that it had recently been the inaugural Scottish Disability Sport Week, which was an opportunity to highlight some of the experiences of people with disabilities in accessing sport and physical activity, which would be supplemented by the discussion today.

The first area of discussion was on research commissioned by the Observatory for Sport in Scotland, where University of the West of Scotland researchers conducted a research project with the aim of gaining insight into the lived experiences of people with disabilities in recreational, club, and elite sport settings. The study sought to identify key barriers to disability sport participation and develop recommendations aimed at increasing participation levels in sport and physical activity.

Some of the key barriers highlighted in the research findings included geographical restrictions, the financial cost of participation, access to equipment, concerns related to potential loss of social security entitlements, and low self-confidence among people with disabilities.

Dr Richard Davison provided an overview of the research, including its intended outcomes and the methodology of capturing data. A more detailed assessment, using the International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health (ICF) Framework, was used for the survey work.

Among respondents, around 80% of the 450 regularly participated in sport. Demographic profiles highlighted two key findings: that individuals had a higher than average level of education, but a much lower than average level of income. Reasons for participation included having fun and improving physical and mental health - these should be considered as the primary motivators.

The most significant barriers cited were low-self confidence and the impact of potentially losing benefits, with the fear that by exercising individuals would be seen as less disabled and therefore unable to claim benefits. Difficulties with transport was the lowest ranked, however the majority of the respondents were already exercising so had come up with solutions to that issue already.

Changes respondents would like to see included the promotion of opportunities and more qualified coaches with knowledge and experience of working with individuals with a disability, and, for example, more individuals with a disability becoming coaches.

The work examining classifications and the ICF has potential to provide more detailed assessment and therefore a more targeted approach.

Gayle McPherson provided an update on the qualitative details provided by a series of focus groups to dive deeper into the issues highlighted.

Issues were exacerbated during Covid, notably with regard to transport and carers, with some people unable to leave their homes, let alone pursue physical activity opportunities. In rural areas transport issues were more significant and a further suggestion was for a national database of accessibility/facilities at clubs to better understand local opportunities. The need for more coaches trained in a variety of sports for individuals with disabilities was also cited, noting that we cannot homogenise a group of people into one activity. The issue of classification was also raised during focus groups, especially considering competitions and events.

The key overall issues included funding, disability-specific coaching provision and more detailed understanding of the nature of disability.

Scottish Disability Sport head of policy Mark Gaffney provided an introduction to the work of SDS as the lead for inclusive sport in Scotland for participants and athletes with physical, sensory and/or learning disabilities.

MG highlighted the importance of the regional manager network noting that if there is anyone out there who has a disability and wants to be more active, there is someone there who can support their journey to be more active. He also highlighted the key role of SDS and partners in changing culture and influencing the sporting landscape to imbed inclusion in all of its practice.

With regard to coaching provision, 8% of the coaching workforce has a disability, up from 2%, so this is moving in the right direction but has further distance to go. MG highlighted the Activity Inclusion Model (AIM) and opportunities to modify an approach to providing activity to ensure inclusion - AIM has been adopted by many SGBs already. EDI continues to be an area of focus across sport and it is important to ensure intersectionality is recognised within that, given key considerations such as the intersectionality of disability and poverty.

MG highlighted positive partnership work such as engagement with health organisations, where there is a prevailing attitude of whole systems approach. The SDS Get Active referral programme works with health professionals to help signpost individuals into appropriate activities and opportunities taking place in local communities. The Get Out Get Active (GOGA) Tayside showcases partnership working with health bodies and embeds interventions to help get the inactive active. It has also provided lessons about being active together and taking individuals and provision into non-traditional spaces - interventions can start with a conversation, with building confidence and starting that journey of moving more and being more active. The importance of work in education and learning was also highlighted.

MG also celebrated the inaugural Scottish Disability Sport, with a communications campaign held to highlight work that's taking place and celebrate partners, with further work in this area planned for future years.

Scottish Disability Sport's Laura Pilkington shared her experience of sport, as someone who had never thought sport was for her, but found swimming an outlet to meet people, develop skills and networks and improve her physical and mental health. Sport provided a mechanism for self improvement and progress, and has subsequently provided employment and leadership opportunities, allowing her to voice her opinion and speak about her experience. LP said sport has been life changing for her and wants to help ensure the opportunities to take part are available to all.

Questions from attendees prompted discussion on topics including:

Provision of activity for those with complex needs, rather than mild to moderate needs

The balance of acquiring more evidence and data versus focusing on the issues that we know are barriers, including better access, more coaches and intersectional problems, especially poverty.

Agenda item 4

Following discussion on the main agenda item, Scottish Hockey chief executive Barry Cawte was invited to provide a short update on the National Hockey Centre in Glasgow.

BC noted that the 2014 Commonwealth Games legacy venue has not properly reopened since Covid and its future remains under threat.

It has had a very positive impact since the venue opened in 2013, with hockey participation doubling in Scotland during that period, with numerous benefits regarding inclusion and health associated with those high participation numbers. The venue also hosts major events and competitions, and provides facilities for 8 community clubs and universities.

Glasgow Life, which operates the centre, has cited financial issues and has not fully reopened the Centre since the pandemic. This includes not providing facilities to change/shower, with players having to cross the car park to an adjoining facility. This has had a direct negative impact on membership numbers and the position of Glasgow Life, which is that it does not intend to operate the Hockey Centre long term, throws the future of the sport into disarray.

There is a mass impact on inclusion by the way this venue is being run and action needs to be taken to ensure its long term viability.

Agenda item 5

The next meeting would be held in the New Year with a date to be communicated in due course.

Thanks were given to all speakers and attendees.

Next meeting date: TBC