



**A REPORT BY THE ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON  
A FIT AND HEALTHY CHILDHOOD**

# **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

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## THE ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON A FIT AND HEALTHY CHILDHOOD

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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## **THE ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP AND THE WORKING GROUP**

The Working Group that produced this Report is a sub-group of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood.

The purpose of the APPG is to promote evidence-based discussion and produce reports on all aspects of childhood health and wellbeing including obesity; to inform policy decisions and public debate relating childhood; and to enable communications between interested parties and relevant parliamentarians. Group details are recorded on the Parliamentary website at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmallparty/register/fit-and-healthy-childhood.htm>

The Working Group is chaired by Helen Clark, a member of the APPG Secretariat. Working Group members are volunteers from the APPG membership with an interest in this subject area. Those that have contributed to the work of the Working Group are listed on the previous page.

The Report is divided into themed subject chapters with recommendations that we hope will influence active Government policy.

### **The Officers of the APPG are:**

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## **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

There are many recommendations flowing from this Report. This is a reflection of the work required to recognise the vital importance of physical education to health and to create the environment that will reverse the strong recent trend of reduced physical activity. The recommendations also appear at the end of each relevant section.

### **1. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION: STATE OF PLAY**

#### **Recommendations**

- 1.1. Government to establish a national PE Taskforce to gather examples of best practice already in existence, prior to using these to develop a PE Curriculum within the National Curriculum that meets 21<sup>st</sup> century needs**
- 1.2. Knowledge of the aims and practice of Physical Education to be embedded into all teacher training and ongoing continual professional development from early years to secondary level**
- 1.3. Increase the number of specialist PE teachers within state primary schools**
- 1.4. DfE review in conjunction with examination boards, of the content of Physical Education qualifications; maintaining parity between practical and theoretical content**
- 1.5. Review of other subjects with the aim of including subject matter on health, fitness and physical activity where appropriate and relevant**
- 1.6. All school settings to examine ways in which they can improve and extend the Physical Education experience for disabled children, to include the use of appropriate equipment and inclusive teaching techniques.**

### **2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION: THE LACK OF CHANGE**

#### **Recommendations**

- 2.1 Review, revision and update of Ofsted requirements for the delivery of Physical Education in all settings from early years through to secondary schools**
- 2.2 Re-structuring and design of postgraduate certificate of education content for PE teachers involving active participation from placement schools in offering wide and broadly-based programmes**
- 2.3 Review of the role of new-build facilities for Physical Education, using best practice in other countries for comparison and adaptation**
- 2.4 Re-structuring of Physical Education programmes for girls, providing a comprehensive offer and a choice that is not dominated by participation in competitive sports.**

### **3. INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

#### **Recommendation**

- 3.1 A new national PE Taskforce to study best practice in the teaching, delivery and integration of the subject in other countries, combined with a parallel survey in the United Kingdom, and to use the outcomes to make recommendations to the**

**Government about teacher training and continual professional development programmes for Physical Education teachers, curriculum development and subject time allocation at all levels within school.**

#### **4. THE HOME NATIONS AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

##### **Recommendations**

- 4.1 Government-funded research to compare practice in Physical Education across the UK with the aim of standardising the philosophy underpinning PE and the activities provided**
- 4.2 Further development of the role of Physical Education within the health and wellbeing specification of curricula**
- 4.3 Reconsideration, leading to re-structuring, of the balance between mandated and non-mandated content in the curricula of the four home nations.**

#### **5. CASE STUDIES ON PHYSICAL EDUCATION: EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE**

##### **Recommendations**

- 5.1 A new PE Task Force to complete a national audit of progressive schemes in Physical Education leading to a re-design of National Curriculum content**
- 5.2 PE Task Force to produce a 'National Directory of What Works in PE' thus enabling schools to improve the content of their PE offer**
- 5.3 A programme of re-training to be established as an essential part of continual professional development for the general teacher; thus enabling schools to reduce the practice of out-sourcing the subject to private coaches**
- 5.4 A programme to be established for the in-school monitoring, assessing and support of private coaches.**

#### **6. PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND THE EARLY YEARS CHILD**

##### **Recommendations**

- 6.1 Create 'National Quality Guidelines for Early Years Physical Development and Physical Activity'**
- 6.2 Review the Ofsted inspection requirements for 'Early Years Physical Development and Physical Activity'**
- 6.3 Create high quality training opportunities for the early years' workforce to ensure their inclusion and effective participation in the PHE 'wider workforce' initiative**
- 6.4 Designate a Physical Development/Physical Activity co-ordinator in every early years' setting**
- 6.5 Make the early years a key component of the work of the new National Physical Education Taskforce.**

## **7. THE CHILD OBESITY STRATEGY**

### **Recommendations**

- 7.1 A Cabinet Minister for Children with the remit to co-ordinate and drive child health and fitness policies across all government departments**
- 7.2 Increase PE training for trainee teachers to include at least two full days on designing and delivering PE lessons with high physical activity for each child**
- 7.3 Design training for playtime supervisors with a feedback route to senior school management**
- 7.4 Funding from the soft drinks levy being used beyond the school gates to also provide accessible physical activity sessions and play opportunities over holiday periods. Inactivity during summer holidays counters fitness built up during term time.**

## **8. THE FUTURE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION: PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY**

### **Recommendations**

- 8.1 A specialist teacher workforce for PE from early years settings through to secondary schools**
- 8.2 Increased time on PE in initial teacher training programmes and continual professional training for qualified teachers**
- 8.3 Direct recommendations re time spent teaching PE to come from the Department of Education**
- 8.4 'Physical literacy' models of assessment in schools to be formulated on an individualised basis; physical activity data to be included annually in the Health and Social Care Information Centres Health Survey for England**
- 8.5 Government-funded research into use of new technology within a PE context; evidence-based examples of good practice to be published and widely cascaded PE and time spent on PE to be part of a school's Ofsted assessment**
- 8.6 Sector/government partnership in designing a new curriculum for PE with a strong emphasis on personalisation and in which the needs of disabled children are fully met**
- 8.7 Create a new team in every school which is dedicated to promoting all types of physical activity (ideally linked to the catering/nutrition team), PE, sports staff and play staff would all be part of the team; each offering the children a choice of opportunities from increased daily activity. Train the team to deliver a full range of beneficial activities, under the supervision of the qualified team leader (likely to be a specialist PE teacher with a sound understanding of play and specific training in play will be essential)**
- 8.8 Sports, PE and play to be funded and prioritised equally within the same pot of money, as a holistic, combined intervention within a 'whole school' approach**
- 8.9 Sports facilities both outdoor and indoor and fit-for-purpose equipment to form an essential component of the PE offer in all educational settings**
- 8.10 Play materials should be sourced separately and include 'loose parts' objects.**

## A REPORT BY THE ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON A FIT AND HEALTHY CHILDHOOD – PHYSICAL EDUCATION

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The prevalent way in which Physical Education is all too often perceived is encapsulated by this comment from a secondary school teacher:

*‘As a teacher, I was constantly asked by teenager girls, ‘Miss, can you get me out of PE please?’ Obviously I couldn’t, but sadly I could relate to them. Sometimes you never escape your childhood; the bullying over body image; the ridicule when you come last in the run; the laughter at your lack of co-ordination. As the fat girl of the class, PE was a subject I avoided like the plague, and would constantly forge notes in order not to have to endure it. Of course I understood the teenagers. Times have not changed; bullying is still rife if you are not good at PE- in fact it is worse due to the presence of social media. Emotionally, body image stays with us for the rest of our life, never totally escaping our childhood.’ (KM Salt 2016).*

This bleak perception of PE will resonate with practitioners in primary as well as secondary education. The subject commands a fear factor for too many children and teachers alike.

From such a parlous state, the only way can be upwards for PE and if as a nation we are to nurture children who are properly fit and healthy – the adult society of tomorrow, in fact - we must find a way forward so that young people are able to enjoy Physical Education and benefit from it. This will entail a long-overdue re-design of the Physical Education curriculum, offering differentiation, education and support and eliminating bullying via body image. These ideas are developed in a report entitled *‘Physical Activity and Body Image in Children: Make Time to Play’ (July 2013)* in which Dr Linda Papadopoulous argues that many children are too self conscious to engage in physical activity. More recently, media outlets with a widespread circulation have begun to address the issue, arguing for example that one in three primary school pupils *‘hate exercise’*, half of their teachers say that children do not enjoy Physical Education lessons and risk entering secondary school without basic movement skills (*Sarah Harris, ‘The Daily Mail’ 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2015*). A fresh approach is therefore essential and the time to address it is now.

As professionals, it must be admitted that Physical Educators themselves are in part to blame for the situation in which we find ourselves in this country. The leaders of the discipline have remained largely silent for a generation and the subject has lost its way in terms of curriculum development; thereby failing to keep true to the core purpose for Physical Education. This is not to ‘pick winners’, nurturing future Olympic athletes in the school hothouse, despite the prominence of the legacy debates since the London 2012 Olympic Games. It is to educate children about the physical so that learners are provided with educational experiences from their early years through to leaving school, enabling them to discover their individual route to a lifelong love of, and engagement in, movement, sport and physical activity.

Whilst private schools offer their pupils a vastly superior range of facilities and opportunities for Physical Education, the majority of children who are educated by the state are not so fortunate. This is not always the case in some other European countries. In the city of Amsterdam in the Netherlands where there is no private schooling system, primary schools have a dedicated gym, and in many instances, two gyms (specialised for infant and junior children) for Physical Education. In addition, their primary school Physical Education teachers are specialists and care passionately about the way in which they deliver this valued part of the core curriculum. There is also a pressing need to ensure that emphasis is put on the importance of physical activity in the early years – in fact from birth onwards. In addition, the more active a mother is, the more physically active a child will be, suggests a UK study of 500 mothers and four year olds. Also, recent statistics have shown that only 1 in 10 2-4 year olds meet the Chief Medical Officer's activity requirements, so there is clearly huge room for improvement in increasing the amount of quality physical activity in the early years (<http://www.bhfactive.org.uk/beststart/index.html>). Children are not just 'naturally active' and parents and carers have a crucial role to play in developing healthy habits early on in life.

Professor Sheila Wigmore, Emeritus Professor at Sheffield Hallam University, has highlighted the lack of curriculum innovation that has taken place in this country in Physical Education since 1942. The negative experiences (such as the one outlined above) that many adults endured in Physical Education during their own schooldays have served to erect barriers to being physically active in adulthood rather than inspiring a sustained enthusiasm for a vigorous lifestyle. Young girls in particular are often 'switched off' from Physical Education because of negative experiences at secondary school; many primary teachers neither achieved nor enjoyed success in Physical Education when they were pupils and as trainee teachers themselves and received very little time on the subject. Their consequent lack of confidence impacts detrimentally on the instruction they offer to their learners and a vicious, rather than virtuous, circle entrapping both teacher and taught, is the predictable outcome. There has certainly been growth in the variety of sports and physical activities on offer since 1942, but this has not been complemented by essential change in the subject itself and complementary approaches to teaching.

Today, as the outcomes to the population's health and the nation's finances of an entrenched obesity crisis become common currency, it has perhaps never been more important for the Physical Education profession to grasp the need for leadership and clarity in the message they convey to government. Elected politicians must be equipped with the knowledge to fight for changes that will enhance the experiences and opportunities for future generations. The true purpose of Physical Education is to help all children to find success in their motor development, and through this achievement, to develop a passion for movement, sport and physical activity that will last the length of their lives. This means that developing an innovative national curriculum that suits the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> Century learners in a stimulating and exciting learning environment is not considered an optional 'add on'. Examples of excellent practice are in evidence in some parts of the country, but at present, any learning derived from them is accidental rather than by design. Nothing less than a radical shake-up in the teaching and status of the subject is needed, but first, politicians of all parties must be persuaded of the necessity. This requires interest and interest itself is derived from knowledge.

For far too long, Physical Education has essentially been regarded as the ‘Cinderella subject’ of the curriculum as essentially it remains FOUNDATION curriculum status as well as requiring considerable extra-curricular staff time attention (e.g. attending club and competition fixtures). Furthermore, it continues to be barely referred to by HMI within on-site school inspections and the lack of league table analysis of any aspect of the subject’s delivery further dilutes PE’s status given past and present political focus upon determining schools’ performance via league tables. School senior leaders will naturally have priorities and targets influenced by the degree of external scrutiny made of curricular subjects.

Crucially, both political and educational systems have failed to truly acknowledge the significance of children’s health and wellbeing as an essential gateway to behavioural and academic achievement. The ongoing exemption of both Physical Education and PHSE (inclusive of physical activity) from National Curriculum CORE subject status evidences all too easily how both government and state education are yet to reach a full understanding and consequent short and long term benefits of physical activity upon the whole child and school development (*‘PE, School Sport and The Individual’, Charles Clarke: Attachment 1; ‘Spark’, Prof John Ratey and TED Talk ‘Run, Jump & Learn’*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBSVZdTQmDS>

Champions of Physical Education must inform government and politicians of its purpose. They must supply clear evidence of where different methods are working well (such as those in the Netherlands) and make the case with confidence. Every primary school should have a dedicated Physical Education space, specialist teachers and equipment to deliver a high quality learning experience.

All primary schools should have a dedicated PE and Sports subject leader who takes responsibility for ensuring high quality teaching and learning provision, however, like many other curricular leaders, much needed release time is rarely afforded to address the health of the subject, with classroom teaching and administration responsibilities taking precedence. The notion of a broad and balanced curriculum is seldom represented within weekly whole school staff meeting time with PE rarely provided with even one meeting within a typical year’s allocation. The main current focus remains the quality of data, moderation and assessment.

It is now vital that we must realise change in the value placed upon Physical Education by government; change in the way in which teachers are trained at early years, primary and secondary levels and continuing professional development must be provided for in-service teachers. Physical Education must be at the heart of, and leading, the drive for whole-school approaches to physical activity in the cause of health and fitness. The aim of this Report is to start the conversation so that the process can begin.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION: DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

Physical Education is a mandated curriculum subject in the United Kingdom’s four home nations. In England, it forms part of the National Curriculum at all four key stages and legislation in Scotland has made compulsory a minimum of two hours of curriculum time

each week. This Report considers the history of Physical Education and its current state and recommends future directions for its development. Therefore it is important at the outset to define the terms that will be frequently used throughout the ensuing discussion.

**Physical Education** – enables children from early years to leaving secondary school to develop the skills, knowledge, attitudes and a disposition to pursue a lifelong enjoyment of, and involvement in, physical activity, sports and movement.

Physical Education should be, as the name suggests, education **in, about, and through** the physical.

- Education **in** movement, physical activity and sport to ensure that children maximise their potential.
- Education **about** movement, physical activity and sport to develop scientific, social and cultural knowledge and understanding.
- Education **through** movement, physical activity and sport to nurture enjoyment, confidence, social skills, wellbeing, values and attitudes to serve each individual and society.

The **purpose** of Physical Education is therefore to promote the development of a lifespan involvement in movement, physical activity and sport. This requires a differentiated approach for the vast array of outcomes sought by individuals at different stages in their lives.

**Physical Activity** – refers to any bodily activity brought about by the skeletal muscles that require energy, ranging from walking to vacuuming, gardening to playing sport. There is much research to demonstrate that reducing sedentary time and increasing physical activity has significant health benefits for children and adults alike.

**Exercise** – often used interchangeably with physical activity, exercise is actually a sub-component of physical activity and represents pre-planned, organised movement designed to improve one of the aspects of fitness. These include strength, aerobic endurance, flexibility, muscular endurance and power.

**Physical Literacy** – a child is physically literate if they have developed, or are developing, the **motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding** to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activity throughout their lifespan.

**Movement** – in a similar way to physical activity, refers to the act of moving the skeletal muscles and as such requires the expenditure of energy. In a Physical Education context, movement is more often associated with dance, highlighting the aesthetic quality of movement as opposed to encompassing all types of movement which should be most correctly referred to as physical activity.

**Sport** – is most often used to refer to competitive games or physical activities. Typically in this context, sports are governed by an agreed set of rules and require their participants to learn and exhibit physical athleticism and skill. Sports can be played by individuals, pairs or teams and require physical exertion. Sports form a core part of the Physical Education curriculum and often, the context for physical activity.

**School Sport** – involves the provision of learning opportunities for children in structured activities outside of the Physical Education curriculum, but within a school setting. School sport can involve activities such as team games and school matches, but it is also broader and involves a variety of physical activity beyond the curriculum.

**World Health Organisation** (direct quotation):

**Children and adolescents aged 5-17 years**

- **Should do at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity**
- **Physical activity of amounts greater than 60 minutes daily will provide additional health benefits**
- **Should include activities that strengthen muscle and bone, at least 3 times a week.**

**Adults aged 18 – 64 years**

- **Should do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity throughout the week or do at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity throughout the week, or an equivalent combination of moderate-vigorous-intensity activity**
- **For additional health benefits, adults should increase their moderate-intensity physical activity to 300 minutes per week, or equivalent**
- **Muscle-strengthening activities should be done involving major muscle groups on 2 or more days a week.**

**Adults aged 65 years and above**

- **Should do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity throughout the week, or at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity throughout the week, or an equivalent combination of moderate and vigorous-intensity activity**
- **For additional health benefits they should increase moderate-intensity physical activity to 300 minutes per week, or equivalent**
- **Those with poor mobility should perform physical activity to enhance balance and prevent falls, 3 or more days per week**
- **Muscle-strengthening activities should be done involving major muscle-groups 2 or more days a week.**

**The intensity of different forms of physical activity varies between people. In order to be beneficial for cardio-respiratory health, all activity should be performed in bouts of at least 10 minutes duration.**

## 1. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION: STATE OF PLAY

For the majority of its 200 year history, Physical Education in British schools has taken separate pathways for boys and girls. Imported northern European gymnastics and traditional English sports and games have coloured both, and the twinned legacy is reflected in current school practice. Where Physical Education finds itself today stems from its origins in the 19<sup>th</sup> century independent schools. Provision for girls was patchy, but in boys' schools from 1850 onwards, sports and games were used to instil discipline, promote teamwork, leadership and moral values as well as fostering health and physical fitness. Simultaneously, in northern European countries, gymnastics contributed to health and fitness regimes; men were trained in specialist colleges and some subsequently taught in British schools. After the Crimean War, vaulting and feats of agility were combined with a military drill and by the end of the century, free-standing Swedish-inspired exercises were popular. The 'games master' was a product of the 1860s.

State elementary schools, introduced in the 1870s, were succeeded by new secondary schools after 1900. Provision for boys was standardised: lessons in drill, gymnastics and occasionally swimming, were the norm in primary schools. At secondary school pupils were taught both gymnastics and games. All masters were expected to lend a hand with games, but gymnastics was the preserve of specialist ex-military staff. For girls, the evolution of Physical Education was slower. Until the 1870s, it consisted of light walking and demure dancing, but the founding of women's colleges at Oxford and Cambridge had a knock-on effect at secondary schools where games mistresses were appointed who had been keen sportswomen at university. By the 1890s, a string of teacher training colleges that endorsed Swedish gymnastics provided a fresh career option for middle-class girls who went on to take charge of gymnastics and games in their school posts.

In 1933 a men's physical training college at Leeds Carnegie opened, followed by another at Loughborough in 1937. Gradually, ex-military instructors in boys' schools were succeeded by specialist teachers, though unlike in the girls' schools, non-specialists continued to assist with games. This remained the pattern of teaching for Physical Education until the 1980s. The subject developed further in the post-war era with the addition of music-and-movement and dance to the primary curriculum and an increase in swimming lessons. The Outward Bound movement and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme brought adventure activities into school; the team game monopoly was challenged by the rise of individual sports and the construction of indoor sports centres and all-weather pitches brought a wider variety of activity to schools that were now largely co-educational although girls and boys were still segregated for Physical Education.

However, the subject was widely regarded as peripheral to the overall school experience and in the 1960s and 70s, education policy was dominated by the reorganisation of secondary education along comprehensive lines. A BJPE editorial comment on the 1975 White Paper, *'Sport and Education'* observed that a solitary paragraph in the 19 page document made reference to Physical Education teachers and concluded that:

*'If PE teachers have thought they had a fundamental part to play in the education of every child, that they provided an essential basis on which active life for work and leisure could be built for everyone, then, clearly, they have to think again.'*

By the late 1980s, a sea-change occurred. An emerging preoccupation with youth health, combined with the blow to national pride because of a perceived lack of success at international elite level served to remove Physical Education and school sport from the wings and placed them centre stage. Intense lobbying by PE associations, coinciding with growing public concern over the sales of school playing fields raised the profile of school sport and Physical Education was included for the first time in the new National Curriculum. As a consequence, timetabled lessons for pupils were taught by specialist teachers and a broad range of extra-curricular sports, games, matches and recreations was provided by teachers from across all subjects.

When John Major became Prime Minister in 1990, his enthusiasm for school sport saw fresh calls for the 'restoration' of competitive games to the school curriculum; however a potential 'new dawn' was blighted by the conflict over teachers' contracts, which were based upon fixed working hours. The outcome was a huge reduction in extra-curricular state sector provision resulting in both competitive and recreational sport disappearing entirely in many schools and the sale of redundant playing fields. Following tradition, those attending independent schools were unaffected by the turmoil: Physical Education provision remained strong and much good practice diffused from innovative teachers and ambitious heads' associations. Preparatory schools had long favoured specialist subject teachers over the generalist class teacher and from the 1980s, they employed specialists in Physical Education whilst state primary schools largely abandoned the subject to the non-specialist class teacher. Further curriculum development occurred in senior independent schools whereby some embraced the principle of a compulsory co-curriculum of activities, including sport, to run alongside formal lessons to foster aims beyond the narrowly academic. The goal of a holistic education propelled these initiatives and the depth and breadth of provision in independent schools led to a separation of leadership and management: a director of PE for the timetabled provision worked alongside a director of sport for co-curricular activities.

In 1997 a Labour Government stated its commitment to education, with school sport and Physical Education emerging as a potentially ideal cross-departmental vehicle for the Government's broader social aims. Further new posts of School Sports Co-ordinators were created and, together with the introduction of Specialist Sports Colleges, they elevated the status of the subject. The new millennium has witnessed concerted attempts to regain the state sector's lost ground. In 2003, the Government set out its new PE School Sport and Club Links Strategy (PESSCL) which included a £1billion commitment to 'transform' PE and school sport in the state sector and improve school sports facilities. In addition, the Youth Sport Trust (YST) and the Association for Physical Education (AfPE) have enabled many primary schools to share the services of a specialist Physical Education teacher and the YST has provided opportunities for competitive sport in secondary schools. Nationwide, popular competitions in a variety of sports at both senior and junior levels have boosted participation and academy-status has allowed many schools to extend the teaching day to accommodate some aspects of the curriculum, sport included.

However, despite school reorganisation and new post creation, barriers to participation in Physical Education clearly exist and will take some dislodging. The Youth Sport Trust has carried out important work in this field and its findings are instructive.

Some examples of the barriers to participation are:

- **Insufficient choice of activity:** The Youth Sport Trust's Girls Active Camp found that girls consider that Physical Education lessons lack a sufficient range of activity (*Youth Sports Trust, 2015. Perfect PE*)
- **Girls are less active than boys:** In comparison with boys, more girls aged 5-15 fail to meet the minimum recommended guidelines for physical activity; 89% of girls to 79% of boys. (*Youth Sport Trust, 2015. Findings from the You, School and PE Survey*)
- **Young disabled people are less active than those without a disability:** Young people aged 14-19 with a disability (55%) are less likely than those without a disability (62%) to engage in sport at least once a week. Compared to young people aged 14-19 without a disability (71%), a higher proportion of young people with disabilities (84%) would like to do more sport (*Sport Wales, 2012 Sports participation amongst 14-21 year olds: How do we encourage young people to stay involved in sport?*)
- **Young people would like to undertake more physical activity:** 40% of young people say they would like to do more physical activities and 75% of young people say that they enjoy PE lessons in school (*Youth Sport Trust, 2014, Class of 2035*)
- **Young people lack the necessary physical skills:** Almost a quarter (24%) of young people was classified as below average for their motor proficiency skills (*Young Foundation, 2012 Move It: Increasing young people's participation in sport*).

The quality of the school Physical Education experience is a key determinant of children's activity levels. The Youth Sport Trust's 'You, School and PE' report states that their research findings indicate that either 14% 'hate' or 'dislike' PE and their subsequent inactivity levels have been coloured by negative school experiences. This combined with the different heritage, aspiration, gender and cultural drivers of a multi-cultural student population mean that the Physical Education requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century child are vastly different from those of their 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century counterparts. In addition, the pressure to achieve academically, has meant that some pupils are simply reducing the time they spend on physical activity (*Young Foundation, 2012 'Move It: Increasing young people's participation in sport'*) and the transition from primary to secondary school can lead to less participation (*Allender, Cowburn and Foster (2006) 'Understanding participation in sport and physical activity among children and adults: a review of qualitative studies'*). Analysing what is current practice in Physical Education and discussing the future of the subject are crucial areas to address, in order to ensure that the subject is not marginalised at a time when such a premium is put upon academic achievement in the 'core' subjects. When Physical Education is of high quality, it can assist in the achievement of many beneficial outcomes and an epidemic of physical inactivity, by contrast, represents a serious problem for society in health and economic costs. When the Physical Education content is sufficiently inclusive to lead to a significant increase in physical activity levels, the health benefits are clear; what is not so widely understood is that a substantial body of evidence suggests (*Young Foundation, 2012 'Move It: Increasing young people's participation in sport'*) that additional benefits can accrue, including crime reduction, supporting mental health and wellbeing, the

creation of communities that are more cohesive, and increasing (rather than inhibiting) academic attainment.

The state of play in today's schools is characterised by individual Physical Education departments and what is provided is variable due to expertise, experience and beliefs, environmental considerations and the constraints of working conditions. A Physical Education subject leader usually oversees practice in primary schools but initial teacher training programmes and continual professional development programmes have very limited Physical Education content so that the general teacher may lack confidence in their ability to deliver high quality PE lessons. This has led to a frequent outsourcing of primary school programmes and the introduction of sports coaches and/or sports development officers. It is a shame to see so many schools outsource PE provision to barely qualified sports coaches who deliver the subject unsupervised and unevaluated. It is also as unfortunate as it is common for schools to use beginner coaches, qualified in one sport, to deliver across the entire PE curriculum. A Level 1 or 2-qualified sports coach will probably not have the demonstrable understanding of child development, age-appropriate pedagogy and the National Curriculum knowledge and expertise in order to deliver PE to the required standard. The primary school premium is often used as a funding source for the employment of sports coaches. Where Physical Education is outsourced in this way, it is then essential to ensure that the subject maintains focus on its primary aim of providing positive learning experiences for **all** pupils in the activities delivered.

In secondary schools, PE lessons are customarily taught by specialist teachers, usually via one hour lessons twice weekly. In Wales, the average time spent in PE is 99 minutes per week (*'School Sport Survey 2015'*). During this time, pupils should ideally engage with a broad-based and balanced curriculum. However, it is often reported that competitive activities and team sports in particular, are dominant. The time-worn multi-activity, skill-drill approach, where students spend much time learning a variety of sports techniques in isolation, is frequently cited as normal practice and this can never satisfy the needs of all learners. Developing and cascading best practice that is supportive of the holistic development of all pupils is important if Physical Education is to achieve the aims to which it aspires. These are complex and include the promotion of health and wellbeing and the development of positive character and values. The activities delivered within Physical Education should ideally support pupils to learn the skills necessary to enjoy a lifetime of physical activity, but the ambition of the aims above is difficult to satisfy if lesson time continues to be limited to one or two hours per week.

Creative activities such as dance and gymnastics are a frequent component of a pupil's Physical Education experience. Such activities have a key role to play in developing competent movers, especially if combined with the teaching of body management techniques. Activities termed 'adventurous' are often considered to be too challenging to deliver within Physical Education because of timetabling restrictions and the limited lesson time curtails the opportunity to engage in activities beyond the school gates. Activities that can be delivered on site are therefore frequently chosen, such as orienteering, problem solving and bouldering. If schools have experienced specialist members of staff with additional qualifications and the confidence to deliver adventurous content **safely**, the range of these activities may be greater. However, timetabling restraints make the

organisation of off-site activities difficult and activities such as canoeing, climbing and surfing are most likely to be offered as part of extra-curricular programmes.

Physical Education content frequently includes health, fitness and exercise-based activity, thus strengthening the pupils' knowledge about the role of physical activity within a healthy lifestyle. In practice, such a programme could include running, exploring and jogging and different forms of strength and conditioning activities. Methods such as circuit training are often adapted and used and these types of activity have risen to prominence recently because of the awareness of widespread physical inactivity and increasing obesity levels. A focus on promoting lifelong participation in physical activity is regularly cited as the overriding goal of Physical Education and as such, this type of activity could be considered as central in providing support to pupils in their individual health and fitness development.

In the early 1990s, academic qualifications were developed in Physical Education and became popular. Pupils can study GCSE, A level and BTEC in Physical Education and sport at key stages four and five and will have more lesson time. Practical activity is complemented by classroom work, supplying pupils with important and theoretical levels of knowledge about a range of topics relating to PE. However, there is a need to ensure that the practical content of these qualifications is not swamped by an excess of theory; also pupils opting for them are usually the ones who are physically active and motivated. As always, it remains the case that the students who are not physically active are the ones who need more curricular time assigned to Physical Education.

Extra-curricular activities, delivered via before and after school programmes and clubs, are usually the remit of the PE teacher. The activities provided will be reliant upon staff expertise, cultural and societal norms and many consist of sporting competitions and inter-school activities. They provide additional physical activity opportunities for pupils who wish, and are able, to attend but successful school sports teams and competitions entail high levels of organisation and can be an extremely time-consuming part of a Physical Education teacher's role. Planning and delivering both curricular and extra-curricular activities can be arduous – more so when teaching timetables and in-school time for preparation is limited.

The state of play for Physical Education today is mixed. Modern thinking unites in the concurrence that Physical Education is an important part of a young person's holistic development and a crucial pillar in lifelong health and fitness with significant benefits to society as a whole. The scope of the subject allows for a wide range of activities but in practice, lesson time is limited to one or two hours a week and because teachers have much autonomy to select the activities they deliver within the curriculum, content and execution are often based on a teacher's own beliefs and background and defined by their personal experience. Physical Education is not embedded sufficiently into general teacher training programmes and continual professional development and in practice, competitive activities (particularly team sports) dominate activities within PE. Additionally, study programmes often follow a multi-activity format, whereby different de-contextualised techniques are learned in isolation, using a skill-drill approach. This practice has been discredited as ineffective in meeting the needs of **all** learners and as such, alternative approaches should be considered and pursued.

In conclusion, the teaching of academic qualifications within Physical Education and the organisation of extensive extra curricular programmes whilst valuable, increase the PE teacher's workload. It is important that pressures from these different areas do not constrain Physical Educators in the pursuit of the core aims of the subject.

### **Recommendations**

- 1.1. Government to establish a national PE Taskforce to gather examples of best practice already in existence, prior to using these to develop a PE Curriculum within the National Curriculum that meets 21<sup>st</sup> century needs**
- 1.2. Knowledge of the aims and practice of Physical Education to be embedded into all teacher training and ongoing continual professional development from early years to secondary level**
- 1.3. Increase the number of specialist PE teachers within state primary schools**
- 1.4. DfE review in conjunction with examination boards, of the content of Physical Education qualifications; maintaining parity between practical and theoretical content**
- 1.5. Review of other subjects with the aim of including subject matter on health, fitness and physical activity where appropriate and relevant**
- 1.6. All school settings to examine ways in which they can improve and extend the Physical Education experience for disabled children, to include the use of appropriate equipment and inclusive teaching techniques.**

## **2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION: THE LACK OF CHANGE**

As with most aspects of Physical Education, 'change' as a concept is not straightforward. At a policy level, it must be acknowledged that indeed there has been some major developments over the last 20 years; the most significant being the subject's inclusion in the National Curriculum in 1991, raising sector hopes that Physical Education would now become a fundamental component of the curriculum rather than retaining its traditional position on the periphery of education policy, dialogue and debate.

Further progress was made in 2000 with the establishment of a National Network of School Sport Partnerships, announced in the Government's document '*A Sporting Future for All*' (DCMS 2000). Now groups of schools could work in conjunction to increase the range and quality of sports on offer to children. In each one, a secondary school Physical Education teacher was allotted two days a week to act as a co-ordinator, whilst a teacher in each of the primary schools was remunerated to receive extra training in sport and PE. Additionally, this network enabled well-equipped 'hub' secondary schools to loan PE teachers to schools lacking them, especially primary schools.

2003 saw the Blair Labour Government's launch of a new strategy to increase participation in physical activity by young people. It comprised eight programme strands: School Sports Partnership, Gifted and Talented, Specialist Sports Colleges, Professional Development, Step into Sport, School/Club Links, Swimming, PE and Sport Investigation. The overall objective of the package was to increase the percentage of 5-16 year-old school children in England who spend a minimum of two hours per week on high quality Physical Education and school sports to 85% by 2008. However, in 2010 a set-back occurred when the new Coalition

Government scrapped all funding for the School Partnership Networks. The Government stated that the existing network of SSPs was neither affordable nor likely to be the best way for schools to achieve their potential in improving competitive sport. The intention was that schools would now be able to determine their own sports priorities, free from a centralised government blueprint. This move was met by protests and £65m was reinstated but what remained was only a partial programme, under a different guise.

Also in 2010, the Government announced the establishment of the Schools Games. This inter and intra-school competition for young people aged 7-18 is designed to motivate young people to participate in more competitive school sport. Initially known as the UK School Games, an annual event for the most talented school-age athletes, the new format called 'School Games' is a year-round, inclusive sports competition for children across the ability range. The programme included the appointment of approximately 450 School Games Organisers to support the delivery of the School Games (as well as Change4Life) in schools nationwide.

In March 2013, the Government announced that it would provide additional funding of £150m per annum to improve the provision of Physical Education and sport in primary schools. The original commitment ran from 2013-2015 and the funding was provided jointly by the Departments of Education, Health and Culture, Media and Sport. It was ring-fenced and directly allocated to primary school head teachers and could only be spent on the provision of PE and sport in schools. The then Chancellor, George Osborne, stated in his 2016 Budget that the revenue from the soft drinks industry levy over the scorecard period would be used to double the Primary School PE and Sport Premium from £160m per year to £320m per year from September 2017 to assist schools in their support of healthier and more active lifestyles. This funding will help primary schools to make further improvements to the quality and breadth of the Physical Education and sport offer.

Over the past three decades, the increasing professionalisation and commercialisation of sport has led to a marked increase in degrees and other qualifications in sport and exercise sciences. New school qualifications have been joined by the presence of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in a variety of subjects (including sports psychology, sports management and physical and sport education) leading to a notable increase in the number of individuals with a high degree of specialised knowledge in sport, physiology and the sciences behind sport and physical activity.

These are real developments, and represent progress, but it can be argued that a familiar stalemate persists at delivery level. As recently as 2011, David Kirk suggested that Physical Education was in need of radical reform from its existing multi-activity teaching of sports techniques (*'Physical Education Futures' 2011*). Kirk describes the repeated delivery of introductory level programmes on a range of activities; however lack of change and continuation of time-worn established practice can be attributed to a number of factors including teacher beliefs about the overall purpose of PE, what they are made accountable for in school inspections and performance management and their background in terms of their experience both in Physical Education and in sport and physical activity more broadly.

Despite the increasing emphasis on student-centred learning in other areas of the academic curriculum, this remains rare in PE. In many instances, the teacher (or coach) remains at the heart of the class, firmly 'in charge' whilst activity is still teacher-led with children in a supine role, waiting to be told what to do. This appertains especially where resources and time are limited and the consequence is that many teachers will fall back on competitive games as the easiest way to occupy a large class of students and fulfil the timetable requirement. Such a 'solution' has the knock-on effect of making sporty children sportier but it will not engage those who do not naturally excel at physical activity or traditional team sports. At the same time, there is limited opportunity for children to explore and discover what types of alternative physical activity might suit them.

In addressing the lack of change in Physical Education, it is useful to analyse current practice in teacher training and continual professional development. Following their sport or Physical Education degree, most aspiring teachers study a one year postgraduate certificate in education: an intensive year, revolving around school placements. As a consequence, much of what the student teacher learns is the ongoing practice in their placement schools and as such, existing practice is cascaded and repeated when they take up posts themselves. For any new teacher in their first post, revolutionising and overturning existing practice in a department is difficult – even impossible. Change-makers are more likely to be found within the ranks of the experienced teacher, yet they are confronted with challenges and restrictions of their own. These are likely to be financial, limited space, facilities and equipment and large class sizes with a wide range of pupil ability. Adventurous activity is likely to be the casualty if necessarily curtailed by the length of an hour's lesson and the increased focus on core subjects and pressure on schools to achieve high rankings for their pupils in standardised tests, opens up the likelihood that PE will be further marginalised. Children's 'attainment' in PE is most frequently graded on their presence in class and their appearance (correct kit). There is no assessment of a child's health and fitness and no consensus within the sector as to the desirability of this, and unless the subject is being studied for a formal academic qualification, the only check made on children during their 13 years of compulsory PE is whether they can swim 25m in Year 6. It is frequently discharged by asking them - as opposed to observation.

The sale of school playing fields in the 1980s and early 1990s was a game-changer for school physical activity, which means that many schools are today still coping with the same physical facility deficit that they were faced with over 20 years ago. Where facilities do exist, improvements or upgrades to reflect new opportunities in PE are rare. Despite a huge amount of capital provided to state schools over the last 20 years (for example, through Building Schools for the Future) the spending focus was primarily on buildings and academic facilities and resources. Where new sports facilities were provided, they often followed a standardised, uniform approach in the style of the old, traditional indoor halls. At the same time, little thought has been expended upon those facilities which support Physical Education. The school changing room is more often than not, as unsavoury and unwelcoming a place as it was decades ago, and it remains a place where girls in particular feel uncomfortable and self-conscious. Many schools still do not have proper shower and hair-drying facilities and the forged PR 'sick note' is a customary way to avoid embarrassment and fear of body-shaming.

A new pathway in PE for girls is perhaps the most urgent need. By no means all enjoy competitive sport and a study by the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation from 2012 found that 45% of girls found sport too competitive. However, 75% of girls surveyed also said that they would like to be more active (<http://www.youthsporttrust.org/news-media/news2012/05/half-of-girls-in-the-uk-are-put-off-physical-activity-by-school-sport-and-pe.aspx>).

Girls who do not favour sport run the risk of becoming disenfranchised from physical activity although this could be addressed by ensuring that PE lessons offer a wider type of physical activity, to cater for different tastes and abilities. These might include general physical activity such as running and climbing, non-competitive activities such as yoga and dance and individual sports such as swimming.

Enhanced messages about health and wellbeing are being increasingly disseminated by the media and provide an opportunity for the Physical Education sector to reconsider the status and value of its subject. At a time when accountability is paramount, taking a back seat and adopting a coasting approach is not an option. The benefit of Physical Education is advocated by a growing body of academic research, but while progress has occurred in some respects, in others time has stood still. To achieve lasting change, the subject needs to acquire value so that school administrators afford it the time and resources required. The PE sector must be a more vocal champion in demonstrating how the subject contributes in a positive way to the development of young people. Examples of good practice in schools here and in other countries certainly exist, but they require cascading to wider audiences. Initial teacher training and continuing professional development will be key enablers in this process and local and national government must be persuaded that participation in competitive sport alone is not the only determinant of health, fitness and wellbeing. Physical Education is capable of infinite variety. At the moment, this is not the experience of the majority of children - but it should be.

### **Recommendations**

- 2.1 Review, revision and update of Ofsted requirements for the delivery of Physical Education in all settings from early years through to secondary schools**
- 2.2 Re-structuring and design of postgraduate certificate of education content for PE teachers involving active participation from placement schools in offering wide and broadly-based programmes**
- 2.3 Review of the role of new-build facilities for Physical Education, using best practice in other countries for comparison and adaptation**
- 2.4 Re-structuring of Physical Education programmes for girls, providing a comprehensive offer and a choice that is not dominated by participation in competitive sports.**

### **3. INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Physical Education is a school curriculum subject in many countries. Global bodies including the World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) have advocated it as an entitlement for children everywhere, citing health benefits through the promotion of lifelong involvement in physical

activity. The Copenhagen Consensus Conference 2016: *'Children, Youth and Physical Activity in School and During Leisure time'* (Jens Bangsbo et al, 27/06/16 <http://bjism.com/content/early/2016/05/27/bjsports-2016-096325.full-aff-1>) was a forum for progressive thinking and shows that experts exist who have already moved beyond the 'good enough' mindset of some governments when considering children's entitlement to the physical:

*'Between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> April 2016, 24 researchers from 8 countries, and from a variety of academic disciplines, gathered together in Snekkersten, Denmark, to reach an evidence-based consensus about the benefits of physical activity in children and youth (aged between 6 and 18 years). Physical Activity (PA) is an overarching term that consists of many structured and unstructured forms of activity within both school and 'out-of-school-time' contexts. The scope of PA includes organised sports, formal physical education, outdoor recreation, motor skill development programmes, playtimes and types of 'active transportation' such as biking and walking. This consensus statement demonstrates accord on the effects of physical activity on children's and youths' fitness, health, cognitive functioning, engagement, motivation, psychological well-being and social inclusion. It also presents educational and physical activity implementation strategies. The consensus was obtained through an iterative process that began with presentation of the state-of-the-art research in each domain, followed by plenary and group discussions. Ultimately, Consensus Conference participants reached agreement on the 21-item consensus statement'* (<http://bjism.bmj.com/.../.../2016/05/27/bjsports-2016-096325.full>).

The International Olympic Committee has advocated the inclusion of Physical Education in school curricula to promote and support the development of sport and a number of other international organisations have been formed to unite and introduce those interested in Physical Education, including the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE), the International Council for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Sport and Dance (ICHPER.SD) and the International Association of Physical Education in Higher Education (AIESEP). By examining differing international perspectives and approaches to PE, we can learn a great deal about further developing and strengthening Physical Education opportunities for children and young people in the United Kingdom.

**Sweden** - PE's lengthy history in Sweden (over 170 years) stemmed from the work of teachers such as Ling in gymnastics. The gymnastic imperative meant that the emphasis was originally on movement but in 1994, health was introduced as part of Physical Education and this has had the effect of redefining the teaching of the subject in school. In 2011 an educational reform set the central content of PE to be movement, health and lifestyle and outdoor life and activities. Skills and knowledge for Physical Education are laid out in standards to be reached by years 6 and 9 of schooling. Students are graded on their attainment (A-E) and assessed nationally. At both primary and secondary levels, PE is taught by subject specialists. A 2014 Swedish study (Kall, LB, Nilsson, M, Linden, TH, 2014 *'The Impact of a Physical Activity Intervention Program on Academic Achievement in a Swedish Elementary School Setting'*, *Journal of School Health*, 84(8), 473-480) aimed to prove that switching time from academic subjects to physical activity does not endanger achievement in those subjects, rather it enhances achievement. Children in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade at school were allocated two extra 30-45 minute play and motion sessions in addition to the two hours of

physical exercise that was already embedded into the timetable. The researchers found that those who participated were twice as likely to achieve the national learning targets in Swedish, English and Maths than comparable children in other schools who received no extra play and motion sessions.

**New Zealand** – Physical Education is one of eight learning areas within the New Zealand National Curriculum, which provides the teaching framework at primary and secondary levels. It sets out a 21<sup>st</sup> strategy for learning which includes identifying the core vision, values and principles for education. In New Zealand, Physical Education is taught alongside health/health education, and PE staff frequently takes responsibility for teaching components such as mental health, food and nutrition, education in sexuality and body care, along with physical activity, outdoor education and sports studies. Home Economics also sits within the learning area which is underpinned by four underlying concepts. These are ‘haurora’ (a philosophy of health and wellbeing that is unique to the country) attitudes and values, socio-ecological perspective and health promotion. The concepts are complemented by four learning strands: personal health and physical development, movement concepts and motor skills, relationships with others and healthy communities and environments. Each strand has a series of aims through which children can demonstrate their achievement and the aims form a framework for teaching across primary and secondary levels. In addition, the curriculum and bicultural nature of New Zealand itself provide an excellent mechanism to explore culture and values within the health and Physical Education perspective. A key issue in schools is the translation of the curriculum from policy to practice, particularly in relation to socio-cultural concerns and critical pedagogy.

**United States of America** - In the 1990s, there was a reversal from existing practice which had, since the 1950s, been for US schools to offer Physical Education to pupils on a daily basis. This was largely due to increased curriculum time for academic subjects but the ‘*Healthy People 2000 National Report*’ advocated a return to daily provision of PE time. This goal is yet to be reached and research undertaken by the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) found that 22% of schools did not require students to participate in any Physical Education lessons. The American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) have called for high quality PE programmes to include 150 minutes per week in elementary schools and 225 minutes per week in secondary schools for all pupils. In US elementary schools in particular, there has been an increasingly persistent demand for a firm focus on fundamental movement patterns; the development of physical literacy. An associate of AAHPERD, The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) has stated that the goal of Physical Education in a US context is to ‘*develop physically educated individuals who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity.*’ To this end, NAPE and AAHPERD established the Let’s Move: Active Schools programme in 2013 to ensure that children receive at least 60 minutes physical activity daily and making sure that schools are aware of the positive connection between physical activity /PE and academic success. A further initiative, Shape America ([www.shapeamerica.org](http://www.shapeamerica.org)) is committed to empowering all children to lead healthy and active lives through effective health and Physical Education programmes, emphasising that in the absence of these, it cannot be asserted that children are provided with a well-rounded education. Not waiting for major educational policy changes and new curricula, many US teachers have already introduced extra physical activity into their lessons and in

some South Carolina classrooms, children undertake academic tasks whilst exercising, using a wide range of gym equipment

(<https://www.sciencedaily.com/videos/e1be19c1b1fec3ee98a8b7c22ba9f2fd.htm>). The development of integrated programmes relies on a creative approach to the curriculum; for example, some teachers in the US combine Maths with intentional movement. Learning numerical tables loses its tedium, becomes fun and leads to solid knowledge when children jump, clap or use beanbags to literally embody number facts. A set of videos accessed via [www.jamieyorkpress.com](http://www.jamieyorkpress.com) show how movement is used to strengthen learning for primary age children and one of these, Waldorf Math Grade 2 Three's table w clapping, in particular, illustrates that a movement element is an intrinsic part of learning as it keeps children engaged and is fun.

**Netherlands** – The Netherlands have national recommendations for time on Physical Education both in primary and secondary settings. It is a compulsory subject but some flexibility exists in time allocation. Children in years 1 and 2 receive 9 PE lessons per week, with all other children receiving two lessons per week. In 2012, the Government in Netherlands published a strategy to widen the aims and range of PE, thus moving the subject away from a limited focus on developing movement and physical abilities solely for the purpose of playing a range of sports. Both teacher training programmes and the content of Physical Education programmes have changed and now curriculum content in both primary and secondary schools is focused upon enabling children to develop healthy and active lifestyles. The quality of provision and facilities in cities such as Amsterdam (where, as previously stated, there is not a private school system) is powered by the desire to combat both physical inactivity and obesity in the population overall. The city council has created a collaborative partnership with one of the city's universities, whereby the impact of the strategy is assessed by measuring children's motor development rather than on assessing fitness levels. The results of the testing are shared with the school and the Physical Education teachers so that they can devise individualised programmes for each child to help them to maximise their own potential.

Internationally, the picture is also widening to address the issue of nutrition within the context of physical activity. This has not always been auspicious. The 2016 European Football Competition demonstrated the power that the food and drink industry has capacity to unleash, by sponsorship of high profile sporting events. For hours, the football enthusiasts in the continent's population, including children, were subjected to advertisements on-screen and around the pitch, no doubt acting as a potential prompt to consume fast food and sugary drinks. At the 2012 London Olympics, the International Olympic Committee was severely criticised for junk food sponsorship and The Children's Food Campaign dubbed the event 'The Obesity Games' (*Children's Food Campaign, 2012, 'The Obesity Games - junk food sponsorship of the Olympic Games'*).

Yet the following countries are developing a healthier relationship between nutrition and physical activity and offer a constructive way forward.

**France** – In 2001, France launched its ongoing National Health and Nutrition Programme (PNNS) to encourage healthy eating with physical activity. This comprehensive approach relied upon a combination of synergistic and complementary actions, measures, regulations

and laws. It united different strategies orientated towards education, communication, information and the training of professionals within the nutritional environment.

**Australia** – Its Collaboration of Community-based Obesity Prevention Sites (CO-OPS Collaboration) is an excellent example of procreating an operational framework for effective action, systems for learning from one another, advice on what works and a platform for knowledge translation and exchange. There is also a community-based obesity prevention plan for young children called ‘Romp and Chomp’. The focus is upon promoting healthy eating and active play to achieve a healthy weight in children less than 5 years of age. The behaviour change messages are an increase in daily active play, increase in water consumption and fruit/vegetables, but a decrease in TV viewing and screen-based activities.

**Denmark** – In Holbaek a more individualised programme has been initiated for overweight children, covering multiple aspects of a child’s life. These include physical activity, diet, portion size, sleep times, time between servings and screen-time.

**Italy** - A ‘Class Sports’ programme promotes PE from primary school onwards combined with a parallel promotion of fruit and vegetable consumption.

**Spain** – The ‘Som la Pers’ programme school-based intervention is designed to increase physical activity and encourage the consumption of fruit and vegetables.

**Portugal** – Its ‘Growing up with a healthy weight’ programme in the Alentejo Municipality provides healthy eating and physical activity advice for the growing child.

**Poland** – Two well structured programmes exist in Poland, ‘Keep Balance’, a national long term project of nutrition and physical activity and ‘Keep Fit.’

**Austria** – A number of programmes exist in Austria, including ‘Exercise is Fun’, ‘Drink Smart,’ ‘School Buffet Check’ and ‘Fit for Austria’.

**Canada** – There is no healthy eating component in Canada, but an effective programme is the 12 year ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for children and young people, linking physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep. It is framed by the question ‘*Are Canadian kids too tired to move?*’. The focus centres upon Sweat, Step, Sleep and Sit and continues to have a positive impact nationally.

All these programmes are capable of development and improvement, but the very fact of their existence demonstrates that 21<sup>st</sup> century Physical Education and its role in school is at a far remove from the ‘drill–skill’ ethos of yesteryear. The challenge now is to train teachers to deliver PE programmes that are complex, ambitious and far-reaching and to introduce physical activity into academic subject content, health and wellbeing strategies and maintaining good mental health. The Physical Education teacher’s responsibilities are no longer confined to the sports pitch and the importance and status of the subject mean that sixty minutes once a week is insufficient to deliver new curricular goals. Radical subject delivery and re-structuring within the school timetable at all levels is urgently required.

## Recommendation

- 3.1 A new national PE Taskforce to study best practice in the teaching, delivery and integration of the subject in other countries, combined with a parallel survey in the United Kingdom, and to use the outcomes to make recommendations to the Government about teacher training and continual professional development programmes for Physical Education teachers, curriculum development and subject time allocation at all levels within school.**

## 4. THE HOME NATIONS AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Within the four home nations, there are some areas of commonality in the National Curricula generally and the specific curriculum foci for Physical Education, but distinct differences exist in how Physical Education is envisaged and delivered in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England. As an overview, the main emergent factors can be summarised as a lack of philosophical underpinning of the England curriculum and the absence of development across key stages of the England and Northern Ireland curricula. In England, there is an over-concentration upon competition and a narrowness of the suggested subjects for focus, combined with a lack of accountability to the aims and purposes of the National Curriculum. In addition, there is no evolved consensus around how to measure success in regard to meeting the aims and purposes of the PE curriculum in England as written. The more developed intent, philosophy and coherence can be found within the curricula for Wales and Scotland.

In Scotland, Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport (PEPAS) are delivered in schools through Education's Health & Wellbeing outcomes of the Curriculum for Excellence (3-18 year olds). PEPAS aims to deliver against four main capacities: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. The Scottish Government has recognised the importance of Physical Education to pupils' health, educational attainment and life chances and legislated that by 2014, pupils in primary education should receive two hours of PE per week and two periods per week at secondary level.

In November 2015, the Scottish Government recommended that every primary school implement 'The Daily Mile' an initiative founded at a large Scottish Primary School by the then head teacher Elaine Wylie in 2012. Three and a half years later, initial results from a longitudinal research study conducted by the University of Edinburgh and Stirling indicated that the obesity levels of the children in the founding school were almost half that of the Scottish National average. These findings have been attributed to the school's culture of walking, jogging or running for 15 minutes in school every day (barring in adverse weather conditions). Within four weeks of implementing the scheme on a daily basis in school, transformative improvements to children's baseline fitness levels were noted.

The initiative has been adopted by system schools in the UK and beyond and around half of the 2,000 Scottish primaries have adopted the initiative in addition to a further 500+ schools across the rest of the UK. The recently published UK government's Childhood Obesity Strategy has named The Daily Mile as a physical activity that is capable of contributing to the recommended time that children should spend taking daily exercise in schools. The

programme has further been launched in the Netherlands and in Belgium under the nomenclature, 'One Mile A Day'. Encouraging levels of success in combating obesity levels have been claimed for the initiative; however, in some quarters, enthusiasm for it has been nuanced.

Physical Education has thus moved from being one of the expressive arts to being a key component within the Health and Wellbeing curriculum area. Progression is measured through curriculum levels and in reference to Physical Education, expanded to include PE, physical activity and sport, which is a significant curriculum shift. Relevant examples include:

**Early Phase (pre-school to Primary 1 (P1))** – I am enjoying daily opportunities to participate in different kinds of energetic play, both indoors and outdoors (HWB 0-25a). I am learning to move my body well, explore how to manage and control it and finding out how to use and share space (HWB 0-21a).

**First Phase (P2 to P4)** – Within and beyond my place of learning I am enjoying daily opportunities to participate in physical activities and sport, making use of available indoor and outdoor space (HWB 1-25a). I am developing skills and techniques and improving my level of performance and fitness (HWB 3-24a).

**Second Phase (P5 to P7)** – While working and learning with others, I improve my range of skills, demonstrate tactics and achieve identified goals (HWB 2-23a).

**Third and Fourth Phases (Secondary 1, (S1 to S3))** – I can analyse and discuss elements of my own and others' work, recognising strengths and identifying areas where improvements can be made (HWB 3-24a).

Within Physical Education, the areas of focus include:

- Movement skills, competencies and concepts
- Cooperation and competition
- Evaluating and appreciating with separate experiences and outcomes indicated for physical activity and sport such as HWB 0-25a (as above).

## **Wales**

PE is a named subject within the 2008 Welsh National Curriculum, which in Wales applies to learners at Key Stages 2-4 (7-16 years of age). Meanwhile, Wales is currently undergoing significant curriculum reform with *'the aim of it being available to schools by September 2018 and the ambition that all settings and schools will be using the new curriculum to underpin teaching and learning for children and young people aged 3-16'*. Described as 'Curriculum for Wales - Curriculum for Life,' the new curriculum has four purposes at its heart:

- Ambitious, capable learners ready to learn throughout their lives
- Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

With Health and Wellbeing as one of the 6 areas of learning and experience, and Physical Education included in this strand, it is clear that there is real progress and although the precise details are yet to be revealed, the new curriculum will see key stages replaced by progression steps and will be designed to provide a road-map for students on their individual journey through education. In the present curriculum, Physical Education commences in a 'foundation phase' (ages 3-6 years) and is encompassed within the physical and creative development of children. Key areas of concentration in this phase include spatial awareness, balance, control, co-ordination, motor and manipulative skills which can be developed using large and small equipment, indoors and outdoors. Specifically, dance and movement are named in reference to the expressive arts home for Physical Education and the following aspects or contexts are suggested for learning:

**Key Stage 2** – gymnastic and dance activities, adventurous activities (including swimming), competitive activities (team and individual).

**Key Stage 3** – Builds upon the platform from Key Stage 2, developing creative, adventurous and competitive activities. Develop understanding regarding the benefits of physical activity to health and fitness.

**Key Stage 4** – Builds on the platform from Key Stage 3, with students encouraged to develop a growing sense of personal responsibility for a healthy and active lifestyle.

'Sport Wales' also has a major focus on Physical Literacy to ensure that *'every child is hooked on sport for life'* (*Sport Wales*). Measures to support this have included the development of in-service training for teachers, the development of School Sport Survey to better understand Physical Education and sport in Wales and the development of tests and resources such as Dragon sports, Dragon tracker app and the Dragon Challenge physical competence test.

## **Northern Ireland**

Physical Education is a compulsory component of the Northern Ireland curriculum at every Key Station (Foundation – Stage 4) and from the ages of 4-16. It is left to schools to determine how much curriculum time is devoted to PE but departmental guidance recommends that they should provide pupils with a minimum of two hours curricular PE per week. The minimum content for each Key Stage is as follows:

- Foundation and Key Stage One - athletics, dance, games and gymnastics
- Key Stage Two – athletics, dance, games and gymnastics
- Key Stage Three – athletics, games, gymnastics and swimming
- Key Stage Four – pupils must have the opportunity to plan and participate in a regular, frequent and balanced programme of PE that, among other things, contribute to and helps to sustain, a healthy and active lifestyle.

The Northern Ireland curriculum places a high profile on PE, such that it should empower and encourage students to make choices that are both informed and responsible about the role of physical activity in their lives. At Key Stages 3 and 4, the (non-statutory) guidance for Physical Education within the National Curriculum links the subject in with the aims of the

curriculum itself, such that it should help pupils prepare for life and work as individuals, contributors to society and to the economy and environment. Cross-curricular links with, and to, ICT and mathematics are also made. However, there is no reference to outdoor education, and dance is not included as a key activity at Key Stages 3 and 4 when perhaps research would suggest that it might provide an apt medium through which to engage teenage girls at a time when it can be a challenge to keep them involved and motivated in the subject and physical activity in general.

## **England**

The English National Curriculum provides one of the briefest frameworks of the home nations in terms of the philosophy behind, and intent of, the Curriculum, and the documentation for PE is equally brief. While this may give schools additional scope for choice, it does not provide the clear focus that is enshrined within the Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland or as is being developed for the new Welsh National Curriculum.

Upon its publication in 2013, the National Curriculum in England contained the inclusion of Physical Education as one of the foundation subjects at all four Key Stages. The given purpose of the subject, inspiring pupils to excel in competitive sport and other physically demanding activities, also makes reference to supporting health and fitness, character building and values for Key Stages 1-4. The subject aims in England, across the four Key Stages, are to ensure that all pupils (a) develop competence to excel in a broad range of physical activities (b) are physically active for sustained periods of time (c) engage in competitive sports and activities and (d) lead healthy, active lives. The subject content prescribed at each Key Stage is listed below; non-mandated example activities are included in {square brackets}:

**Key Stage 1** – mastering basic movements including running, jumping, throwing and catching, as well as developing balance, agility and co-ordination along with participating in team games and performing dances using simple movement patterns.

**Key Stage 2** – continue with running, jumping, throwing and catching development, play competitive games {for example, badminton, basketball, cricket}, develop flexibility, strength, technique, control and balance {through gymnastics}, perform dances, take part in outdoor and adventurous activities (OAA), demonstrate improvement.

**NB** Swimming instructions should be included at Key Stage 1 or 2. Pupils should be able to swim 25m, use a range of strokes and perform self-rescue in different water situations.

**Key Stage 3** – use tactics and strategies {badminton, basketball, cricket}, develop flexibility, strength, technique, control and balance {through gymnastics and athletics, for example}, perform dances, take part in OAA, demonstrate improvement, take part in competitive sports and activities outside school.

**Key Stage 4** – use tactics and strategies {badminton, basketball, cricket, football, hockey etc.}, improve technique and performance {through gymnastics and dance, for example},

take part in further OAA, demonstrate improvement, continue to take part in competitive sports and activities outside school.

Schools offering their pupils all these activities in addition to scoping the role of PE within health and wellbeing teaching would be providing a rich and varied experience that stood every chance of encouraging a lifelong love of physical activity. However, the non-mandated content is such that some schools could get away with very little indeed. What is referenced in policy and what actually happens in schools can be markedly different and sacrificing important activities in the cause of 'choice' would be to deprive all children whatever their circumstances of the chance to fully explore and enjoy the world of Physical Education and pass this on to their own children in turn.

## **Recommendations**

- 4.1 Government-funded research to compare practice in Physical Education across the UK with the aim of standardising the philosophy underpinning PE and the activities provided**
- 4.2 Further development of the role of Physical Education within the health and wellbeing specification of curricula**
- 4.3 Reconsideration, leading to re-structuring, of the balance between mandated and non-mandated content in the curricula of the four home nations.**

## **5. CASE STUDIES ON PHYSICAL EDUCATION: EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE**

Whilst it cannot be said that **all** children throughout the United Kingdom receive a Physical Education offer that is uniform in its excellence, there are many schools where Physical Education works well for young people. If Physical Education opportunities are to improve for all pupils, it is important that the best schemes are collated and cascaded so that they may be replicated and developed further by PE departments wishing to extend their range of activities and methods of delivery. This Report aims for an overview of PE and it is not feasible to list all the examples of good practice, what therefore follows is a representative selection.

It is perhaps useful to begin by outlining in some detail, two schemes that are effective, and the first one concerns The School Gym at Dyffryn Taf School in Carmarthenshire. It is a multi-component intervention, developed by a team of PE teachers alongside industry experts of gym equipment and software. Phase One of the initiative entailed developing a zonal design, containing private learning spaces that provide a safe environment for pupils to work. A bespoke range of equipment is available within each zone, designed to provide unique stimuli for learning through physical activity (e.g. maze maker, alpha mat). Central to the development is a commitment to motivating young people to be physically active and the integration of the latest digital technologies serves to draw educational programmes of study together with the unique, pupil-centred environment.

A process of 'gamification' utilised within study programmes is a motivator for young people, and the attractive, engaging, nature of the games allows pupils to progress up the

levels, providing independent, pupil-centred programmes of study. The activities within the matrix are based around fundamental and foundational movements and lifelong exercise activities, each in itself containing ten different levels of activity which become increasingly challenging. Moving up the levels on the activity matrix demonstrates an improvement in movement competence and/or fitness. To support a more holistic development of learners, the School Fitness 3T programme rewards pupils through its achievement un-lockables for displaying certain actions or behaviours. For example, if pupils have demonstrated leadership or coaching qualities, the coach or leader achievement is unlocked. The entire system is available on the latest mobile devices through a software programme. Pupils can also upload video images of their activities which their teachers can review offline and accept development or make comment for further progression or training. This allows young people to work independently at whatever their current level. The teacher is then free to support pupil learning, based on their independent needs without having to direct all pupils centrally at the same time. A series of teaching and learning experiences are supplied to support the teacher in delivery, but the non-didactic nature of these allow individual teachers to implement and interpret the programme with their own expertise, based on the classes they are working with. The core focus of the School Gym programme is the development of good movement and higher fitness, using age and ability appropriate exercise activities so that pupils become confident and motivated movers.

*'The system is based on good movement, flexibility and conditioning. It looks at fitness as part of a long and healthy lifestyle. It inspires and motivates a child's imagination through the use of gamification and improvement scoring tables and a value and behaviour-based reward system' (Dr. Mark Bellamy).*

Some of the successes of School Gym include:

- Positive impact on both health and wellbeing, also behaviour and academic attainment
- One third of the school's pupils now do an extra five hours a week of sports outside the School Gym programme
- An average of 60 pupils voluntarily use the gym every lunchtime and such a high level of girls attend these sessions that one School Gym lunchtime session is now dedicated to girls only
- Teachers have noted that behaviour, engagement of pupils, attitude, attendance, self esteem and positivity have improved throughout the school. Academic and sporting achievements since School Gym was installed have been good. The staff and school pupils credit School Gym for this progress:

*'There has been a steady rise in the performance at exams in recent years - completion rate for A-Level students is 90%... Compare this to other institutions.'* (Robert Newsome OBE: Head Teacher).

*'The recently refurbished gym area (installed four years previously but still looking brand new) is an attractive, high quality learning environment and is used in an innovative way to develop pupils' learning skills. The health, fitness and wellbeing programme motivates pupils to a very high level and irrespective of their ability, encourages them to get involved in Physical Education.'* (Estyn Report/Government School Inspection Report).

Another notable case study concerns the Future Zone Education Improvement Partnership, operating in the London Borough of Islington. This consists of collaboration between 11 primary and 3 secondary schools, sharing a budget for joined-up working. Programmes in numeracy and literacy are well-established but in 2014, the partnership was further developed to include a Future Zone PE Network with the aim of improving the delivery and provision of sport and PE, initially in the primary schools. Prior to establishing the Network and its regular meetings to share best practice and ideas, a thorough audit of primary sport and PE in the borough was undertaken. This included discussions with children, and data analysis from schools on after-school club registers. In total, 175 lessons were observed, including six school swimming lessons and of these, 139 classes were analysed to capture data on child physical activity and movement levels, and the role of the teacher or coach in PE or sport clubs. The findings are listed below and provide a very comprehensive view of what PE and sport is like in Islington primary schools:

- An average PE lesson lasts 40 minutes (excluding time getting changed in/out of PE kit)
- Children have the opportunity for movement and physical activity for (on average) one third of a PE lesson
- Half a PE lesson consists of ‘teacher whole class instruction’ which occurs whilst children are sedentary. This is mainly time where the teacher is demonstrating how an activity works, arranging groups or pairs of children, or managing their behaviour
- Two thirds of children enjoy PE but girls are twice as likely as boys to harbour neutral or negative views about it
- When children were asked ‘How could we improve PE and sport at your school?’ the two most common responses were: 1. More time; and 2. More variety/sports.

The above picture was very similar across all 11 primary schools and reinforces national studies on activity levels in school PE (*Physical Activity in High School Physical Education: Impact of Lesson Content and Class Gender Composition*: NJ Lounsbury, MAF & McKenzie TL; *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*; 2014, v11, pp127-135 and *Increasing physical activity levels in primary school physical education: The AHARP Principles Model*, Powell E, Woodfield LA, Nevill AM, 2015).

The audit revealed challenges that sustained across 11 schools despite some very clear differences in demographics. These were:

- **Little or no individual teaching.** Teaching was at whole class level and it was rare for a teacher or coach to help an individual with a particular problem or extend an individual who needed a higher goal
- **Low movement levels and little opportunity to ‘learn by doing’.** 15% of a typical lesson is spent in queuing to have a turn. Only one third presents an opportunity for children to move
- **Very little choice or decision for children.** Half the lessons and clubs offered no decision-making opportunities for children, teachers delivered activities whereby children were directed centrally
- **Poor use and management of external coaches.** 10 of the 11 schools used private coaches to deliver some or all of the PE curriculum. These often took lessons while teachers had PPA time and were frequently poorly directed and supported with no

evaluations or observations. Many coaches were inadequately qualified and insufficiently experienced to deliver the PE curriculum

- **Low status of PE.** Only one of the 11 schools provided more than 90 minutes of PE per week. The subject was often cancelled in weeks where other school activities took precedence
- **Inclusion of girls.** Their enjoyment levels were lower than the boys' enthusiasm and girls were less likely to be included in after-school clubs, inter-school competitions and playground activity
- **Inter-school competition.** Some schools took part in inter-school competition regularly, although the competitions were not necessarily well organised and it was usually the same group of children participating (usually Y6 boys). Some took no part in inter-school competition.

Since the audit, Future Zone PE has begun to address some of these challenges, starting by considering 'Active Learning Time' (ALT) in PE; the amount of time each child has to move and 'learn by doing' in a PE lesson. At Network meetings, schools have demonstrated lessons for each other, exploring a carousel approach through which teachers were better able to deliver varied lessons, better curriculum coverage and smooth transitions through activities. An emphasis was placed upon grouping pupils with similar needs and the teacher spending more individualised time with pupils. In some schools, PE Co-ordinators who attended the FZ PE Network meetings were encouraged to distribute ideas and learning to teachers and deliverers of PE. Presentations were made at schools, lessons observed and feedback given. An audit of Yerbury primary school following four FZ Network meetings and two presentations and demonstrations to teachers in the school denotes a positive difference between the 90 PE lessons observed in the initial 11 school audits and the PE lessons in 2015 delivered by teachers who had been 'trained' by the PE Co-ordinator as part of the FZ PE Network Intervention. The Yerbury audit found that pupils in Yerbury PE lessons had twice the opportunity to move and learn by doing. Teacher intervention time was half that of pre-intervention PE lessons, and this was because of a reduction in whole class management, instruction and behaviour-management time. Almost all teacher intervention time in Yerbury PE was spent in actual teaching of individual children.

Whilst a detailed description of two very effective schemes serves to illustrate just how much design and care is essential to achieve quality and lasting PE outcomes, the selected list below shows that there are excellent examples of progressive thinking and good practice nationwide; what is now required is analysis and collation so that teacher training and practice and curriculum content can be improved.

**Church Drive Primary School in the Wirral** had no suitable PE space outdoors and no green space with just a hard, concrete playground area. In 2014, following a successful application for 'primary space' funding, they created a safe outdoors space for timetable PE lessons, play and increased opportunities for physical activity and after school clubs. They are now seeing improved behaviour and attendance.

**Great Malvern Primary School in Worcester** worked with the Youth Sport Trust on National Curriculum changes and restructured their curriculum to focus on a values approach

through Physical Education. As a result of the changes, more children participate in PE and school sport; behaviour has improved and the confidence of pupils has increased.

**Wensley Fold CA Primary Academy in Blackburn** is a Teaching School and employs a PE specialist who works across a number of schools to up-skill colleagues in the delivery of high quality PE.

**The University of Winchester** has worked with 27 schools since 2013, supporting the professional continued development of Physical Education to over 120 primary level teachers. This support has included delivery of after school training, university/school cross-curricular projects, targeted interventions to enable mathematical progress via physical learning, teachers accessing university taught modules/courses at the university and bespoke in-lesson support with generalist teachers. This has led to teachers regaining confidence in delivering Physical Education after many years of lessons being outsourced to external providers/coaches.

**The Stockport Schools Sport Partnership** links the council, schools and community clubs to encourage all children to enjoy PE, sport and physical activity with major investment in PE lessons.

**Calderdale** has created a Better Living Service in 2015 and made schools a priority to integrate weight management with physical activity services. They put on special health assemblies in schools focused on physical activity and healthy eating and have noticed an increase in momentum.

**Across the UK, the HENRY (Health, Exercise and Nutrition in the Really Young)** national scheme concentrates upon the 0-5 years and has been a very successful 8 week programme. It complements support to older children in the areas of PE and nutrition.

## **Recommendations**

- 5.1 A new PE Task Force to complete a national audit of progressive schemes in Physical Education leading to a re-design of National Curriculum content**
- 5.2 PE Task Force to produce a 'National Directory of What Works in PE' thus enabling schools to improve the content of their PE offer**
- 5.3 A programme of re-training to be established as an essential part of continual professional development for the general teacher; thus enabling schools to reduce the practice of out-sourcing the subject to private coaches**
- 5.4 A programme to be established for the in-school monitoring, assessing and support of private coaches.**

## **6. PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND THE EARLY YEARS CHILD**

Physical Education has a recognised place within the primary and secondary school system but its importance in the early years is becoming more widely acknowledged and this is a good thing. During the initial period in a child's life, physical activity can influence long-term outcomes in health, education and overall development.

The current Chief Medical Officer guidelines for children under five (Start Active - Stay Active: report on physical activity in the UK: Department of Health: First published 11/07/11 – last update: 11/03/16 ) state the following:

- For children not yet walking – physical activity should be encouraged from birth, particularly through floor-based play and water-based activities in safe environments
- Children of pre-school age who are capable of walking unaided should be physically active for at least 180 minutes (3 hours) spread throughout the day
- All under fives should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (being restrained or sitting) for extended periods (except time spent sleeping).

Physical activity should be encouraged and supported from birth and should be incorporated from the outset if it is to become part of routine, everyday life, and trends demonstrate that if this happens, children are more likely to become physically active and to maintain this through to adulthood. (*'Everybody active, everyday, an evidence-based approach to physical activity', PHE, October 2014*).

Today's children are the least-ever active generation in the United Kingdom, placing them at an increased risk of experiencing physical, mental and social health challenges throughout their lives. A recent report (*'British Heart Foundation, Physical Activity Statistics 2015'*) has highlighted that amongst children aged 2-4, only 9% of boys and 10% of girls are achieving their physical activity recommendations in England. Other research findings conclude that traditional children's sport and PE models are insufficient on their own to resolve the detrimental effects of an inactive lifestyle. Starting with the early years, they must be matched with regular activity; bringing basic movement and physical play back into children's lives, supported by parents, teachers and the health sector. The lack of a holistic approach is *'dangerously narrow in scope'* ([www.ukactive.org.uk](http://www.ukactive.org.uk)).

The Early Years Foundation Framework (EYFS) supports practitioners in designing the care and learning for children that is right for each stage of their development. There are seven inter-connected areas of learning and development that must shape educational programmes in early years' settings. One of the prime areas of learning, 'Physical Development', supports children to be active by developing their co-ordination, control and movement and to understand the importance of physical activity (*'Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage', 2016*).

Being active is crucial for children under five because it helps them to build and maintain a good level of health. The British Heart Foundation ([www.bhfactive.org.uk/early-years](http://www.bhfactive.org.uk/early-years)) has outlined the following definitive physical activity guidelines in the United Kingdom that relate to this age group:

- For infants who are not yet walking, physical activity should be a daily experience - on the floor, in water and in safe and supportive environments
- Children of pre-school age who can walk unaided should be physically active for at least 180 minutes (3 hours) spread throughout the day

- All under-fives should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary for extended periods (except time spent sleeping). On average, all children in the United Kingdom spend 24 hours a week in front of a TV/computer and this appertains to very young children as well as their older siblings. It is proven that physical activity for young children supports brain development, enhances bone and muscular development and benefits social and cognitive skill progression and emotional wellbeing. It is collectively agreed that establishing an active life in the early years lays the foundation to continue this optimum behaviour into adulthood
- During the early years, physical activity impacts upon children's health and plays a major role in establishing strong bones and muscles. Physical activity can combat overweight and obesity whilst simultaneously enabling young children to develop vital brain structures to trigger creativity, memory and problem solving. Being active promotes a strong heart, and maintains a healthy blood cholesterol level and blood pressure levels. It can strengthen learning in the area of social and emotional skills, helping young children to be confident, co-operate and interact well with their peers (e.g. taking turns while playing) and caring about others. Overall, being active motivates young children to complete tasks successfully and reach their goals.

In 2016, The British Heart Foundation (BHF) produced a manifesto with four key asks for physical activity in the early years:

**Awareness:** Comprehensive awareness raising, to ensure that health and education professionals and families are aware of, and act upon, the Chief Medical Officer's physical activity guidelines for the early years (2011).

**Education:** An increased emphasis on the importance of physical activity across the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, alongside clear guidance and training for early years practitioners on how to promote and develop children's physical activity.

**Environment:** All children in the early years should have safe, stimulating and accessible physical activity and active travel opportunities in their community.

**Health:** Health professionals should track the physical activity levels of children in the early years together with other health behaviours. These results should be shared with parents whilst supporting them to take positive action to increase physical activity levels amongst their children.

UK Active is an organisation that has openly stressed the crucial role of physical activity in promoting good mental health; it suggests that every person (child or adult) who has a mental health diagnosis should have access to a physical activity intervention in line with NICE guidance, based upon an evidence-based behavioural intervention:

*'Physical activity is recognised to be essential to physical and mental wellbeing and inactivity as a major cause of ill health' (Professor Pringle, President of the Royal College of General Practitioners, 2014).*

Beginning to establish beneficial patterns of activity from birth is therefore crucial to the future health and wellbeing of the adult that the child will become.

However, young children will not develop healthy patterns of physical activity independently and the adults who are responsible for their care are necessary role models for discouraging sedentary behaviours – whether that is time spent in front of a screen, or sitting for hours in a buggy. There is a pressing need to educate and support practitioners in their role in promoting physical activity in the under-fives. A multi-professional approach to enhancing physical education in a variety of early years' settings and schools is required. Health and educational professionals working with children and their families have a definitive duty to promote and provide opportunities for physical activity. They should ideally act as role models, trained in appropriate health promotion approaches which can motivate and excite children and their families in becoming active.

All too often, early years practitioners are not primed themselves to exercise and their attitudes and past negative personal experience can form a barrier and impact detrimentally upon the children with whom they work. Training in motivational interviewing, healthy eating and nutritional awareness and the benefits of regular exercise must be integral to their training if they are to encourage physical activity and enable children and families to relish being active. Undergraduate Early Years and initial teacher training degree programmes such as those at the University of Northampton, offer high quality Level 4, 5 and 6 modules on promoting physical activity and play, in order to advance the understanding of future practitioners and teachers in delivering longer term health benefits. Teachers are now increasing their awareness of the holistic impact of physical activity - not on children's fitness and wellbeing alone, but on their behaviour and cognitive progression. This structured, specialist training of health and educational professionals is essential to enhance sport and physical activity in childhood and the role of the built environment in enabling this must also be considered. Health professionals (for example, midwives, health visitors and school nurses) also have an excellent opportunity to promote activity as part of early family experiences and to include this as part of existing PHE projects such as the National Child Measurement programme, thus affording a more 'joined up' approach to Physical Education. It is important to instil the confidence and capability of the workforce to deliver early help services for children and families whilst working in partnership with providers to grow capacity and community resilience, especially concerning aspects of health and wellbeing. A resolute focus on these areas will support the practitioner workforce in their professional practice and maximise the impact they will have on outcomes for children.

The Wellbeing and Nutrition team from the London Borough of Newham deliver an Association for Nutrition certified 'Physical Activity' module to give early years' practitioners confidence in how to best support families to become more active (<http://www.associationfornutrition.org/Default.aspx?tabid=333>). The training course supports practitioners to translate guidance into practical tips to achieving a more active lifestyle. It also considers which messages can best be linked to established play groups within children's centre and nursery settings. The training connections to sessions such as the ActivTots programme for children aged 18 months to two and a half years engages this

age group and encourages them to 'naturally' be more physically active. There is an obvious need for such schemes to be collated nationally.

Common barriers to encouraging early years' physical activity may include time, tiredness and the equipment required to be active. Confident and appropriately trained practitioners will naturally encourage families to select activities that require minimal facilities or equipment such as walking, jogging or convenient resources in their local community, such as parks and recreation programmes, worksite wellness groups or walking clubs. Families can use technology to download apps that stimulate and give ideas to stimulate physical activity (for example, playing a video that might encourage dancing and movement) or possibly taking a walk as a family rather than watching prime time television.

Early years' practitioners should take the initiative by inspiring parents to promote physical activity from birth, including 'tummy time' rolling and playing on the floor to reach and grasp objects, pull, push and play with others. Toys should be arranged in ways that promote grasping, leg kicking and head lifting, adopting a 'little and often' approach and the early years' workforce should have suitable toys available in their setting to encourage and demonstrate to parents, giving them confidence within baby play groups (*Department of Health, 'Physical activity guidelines for Early Years UNDER 5s – For infants who are not yet walking', July 2011*). Children's and health centres can also communicate key messages on display screens in waiting areas using an example here from NHS Choices (<http://www.nhs.uk/video/Pages/how-active-should-my-child-be.aspx>).

Other activities could include time in the water through parent and baby swim time, or making bath time fun with lots of splashing and songs, or visiting a pool and participating in parent/baby sessions. Time spent playing on a floor with a blanket and wearing clothing that allows infants to move freely and by using different materials for them to reach or turn their heads towards a sound (i.e. rattles or wooden spoons) is valuable – as are 'texture toys' to help a baby's sense of touch. Parents may also be advised to place objects out of reach so that small children can stretch, or to use cushions for them to crawl over and have soft furniture for pulling themselves up with confidence.

When pre-school children have learned to walk, they should be physically alert in many ways and activities should include movements of all the major muscle groups, i.e. the legs, buttocks, shoulder and arms and movement of the trunk from one side to another. Dancing to music from a radio, dressing up and play acting and completing actions to nursery rhymes are other useful and energetic actions. Young children's drive for competence can be easily observed as, in their physical play, they constantly push themselves to achieve something new or to do something that they find testing. By supporting children in achieving challenging physical tasks, adults bolster their growing confidence in their own abilities, or 'self-efficacy'. This leads to a very positive response to difficulties or failures, involving the child in increasing their efforts, experimenting with alternative strategies and ultimately succeeding. This 'virtuous cycle', promoting a 'can do' attitude, supports children in developing emotional resilience in face of problems and obstacles in many arenas. The skill here is for the practitioner to provide opportunities for children to challenge themselves but be also well equipped to provide immediate practical and emotional support when it is necessary.

## Recommendations

- 6.1 Create 'National Quality Guidelines for Early Years Physical Development and Physical Activity'
- 6.2 Review the Ofsted inspection requirements for 'Early Years Physical Development and Physical Activity'
- 6.3 Create high quality training opportunities for the early years' workforce to ensure their inclusion and effective participation in the PHE 'wider workforce' initiative
- 6.4 Designate a Physical Development/Physical Activity co-ordinator in every early years' setting
- 6.5 Make the early years a key component of the work of the new National Physical Education Taskforce.

## 7. THE CHILD OBESITY STRATEGY

After the election of a majority Conservative Government in 2015, individuals and organisations championing policies to promote child health and fitness were encouraged when the then Prime Minister, David Cameron and Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, announced their resolve to prepare a strategy to combat obesity. The two rightly identified the fact that poor patterns of eating and a lack of physical activity can establish a grip in childhood and if unchecked, persist throughout the life course, bringing a range of diseases in their wake and placing an unwarranted burden upon the NHS and Exchequer. The optimism occasioned by the announcement of the forthcoming strategy was dulled, however, when its publication date was subject to repeated delay and cancellation and David Cameron's resignation as Prime Minister gave rise to suspicions that the whole idea might be quietly dropped.

The Child Obesity Strategy was eventually unveiled during the summer Parliamentary Recess when Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt and new Prime Minister, Theresa May were both out of the country, leaving a Junior Ministerial team to defend the proposals. Jamie Oliver, writing in *The Times* gives the flavour of majority opinion about them:

*'On Wednesday night my kids asked me why I was looking grumpy, so I had to explain to them that the prime minister had let British children down.....It could have been one of the most important pieces of work of our time, but instead it was prepared and delivered in the most underhand, insensitive and unstrategic way... It's crystal clear to me that the health of our nation is absolutely not on the agenda for Mrs May and her government.'* (*The Times*, August 19<sup>th</sup> 2016).

Children's food campaigner, Jamie Oliver, who originally rose to fame as 'The Naked Chef' does not mince his words and has pursued this agenda relentlessly. Those arguing for a radical, holistic, approach to child health and fitness in which physical activity plays a key role will empathise with him. However, the Government document states that *'the launch of this plan represents the start of a conversation, rather than the final word'*, and it is the hope of The All Party Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood that policy-makers have left the door open to constructive feedback.

Firstly, despite the fact that the document as a whole represents a failure of resolve and ambition, there are some positive elements, particularly in the area of physical activity in the early years.

- EY is recognised as a critical period that informs and supports the future health and wellbeing of all young children
- 'Updating' the EYS framework to include the Chief Medical Officer's EY Physical Activity Guidelines is a much-needed amendment that will support the Physical Development component of the curriculum
- This will ensure that Physical Activity is embedded in daily practice and will drive changes in accompanying assessment procedures in this field
- Ofsted will then be encouraged to amend their inspection procedures to include measures taken by settings to support PA/Health and Wellbeing
- Practitioners will therefore be encouraged to seek relevant training to ensure that they fully support PA within their PD practice.

The key recommendation for Physical Education in the strategy is that at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity should be delivered in school settings each day, partly through PE. However, most primary school PE lessons are short in physical activity and in order to get 30 minutes of physical activity from PE alone, a child would need to have 10 PE lessons a week (or two a day). The Child Obesity Strategy document claims that *'Many schools already offer an average of two hours of PE or physical activity per week'*, but research studies have shown that this is not always the case and that in a good number of schools, PE is the first subject to be dropped in a week where additional time is needed to realise other outcomes or activities (SATs, Ofsted inspection, school play etc).

The language used in the document is insufficiently forceful. It is not enough to 'offer' physical activity. The strategy should acknowledge that most teachers and coaches do not possess the skills or enjoy the support to design, manage and deliver lessons and sessions that are physically intense and increase heart rates over a sustained period of time. Children standing in queues are not being healthy and children in a PE lesson are not necessarily moving. Rather than counting the minutes in a lesson, a better approach would be to measure the opportunity for movement and 'learning by doing'. Also, by improving the quality of break times, adding more playful features, experiences and opportunities known to promote activity, every child will be able to accrue a full 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous movement per day. Currently, very little time is spent on learning about how to promote playtime activity during teacher training courses and despite the fact that 20% (one fifth) of the school day is allocated to playtimes, the staff charged with its delivery are usually:

- On the minimum wage
- Working for just an hour each day
- With no line of communication to senior management to enable feedback
- Not linked to the culture, values, aims or curricular plans of the school
- Not ever given any instruction/guidance by the Head or Deputy as to the improvement of break times.

It is therefore a pressing need to include a greater emphasis on learning about PE and play in teacher training courses both at college/university and thence as a part of continual professional development in school.

In addition, the strategy makes no reference to the fact that all children have specific needs and are different. The groups of children who are peripheral in the playground, who do no extra-curricular sport and who are most inactive in PE (first 'out' in dodge ball, for example), are at the highest risk, and the ones most in need of the benefits of physical activity. A blanket strategy that just counts the time all children spend in specific settings (PE, playground) will probably not reach the children for whom it was written. Primary school teachers must understand the need to differentiate tasks and outcomes in order to meet the needs of each child. They can thereby identify which children are at risk and plan for their health needs. However, as stated above, they must be provided with extra time and training for this. The profile and importance of PE in schools needs to be raised so that the subject's true outcomes can be realised.

Another area of concern might be that the Strategy might be that it sidesteps the considerable increase in the consumption of energy/sports drinks, particularly amongst young children. These celebrity-endorsed drinks appear to be under the public health radar and are frequently perceived as having a 'health halo' with real benefits for sporting success. Despite limited evidence, the emphasis is on the need to hydrate the body with some schools now encouraging children to stop every 15-20 minutes during exercise for a brightly coloured energy drink. Sports drinks are traditionally laden with sugars and acids and should have a health warning rather than a confused health endorsement. Children need to 'rethink their drink' particularly when linked to sport activities and hopefully choose water.

In his 'Times' article, Jamie Oliver sums up his opinion of The Child Obesity Strategy by stating *'you can't half fix things .... There are many of us who are in this for the long haul.'* It is to be hoped that the Government is true to its word and that this 13 page document represents a prologue to some radical policies that are truly 'fit for purpose' on child health and wellbeing, with a clearly defined role for Physical Education – and not the final curtain.

## **Recommendations**

- 7.1 A Cabinet Minister for Children with the remit to co-ordinate and drive child health and fitness policies across all government departments**
- 7.2 Increase PE training for trainee teachers to include at least two full days on designing and delivering PE lessons with high physical activity for each child**
- 7.3 Design training for playtime supervisors with a feedback route to senior school management**
- 7.4 Funding from the soft drinks levy being used beyond the school gates to also provide accessible physical activity sessions and play opportunities over holiday periods. Inactivity during summer holidays counters fitness built up during term time.**

## 8. THE FUTURE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION: PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY

A premise of this Report is that whilst models of excellence certainly exist (such as the Mind, Nutrition, Education, Do it! programmes rolled out by Mytime Active in the London boroughs of Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, Hammersmith and Fulham) there has been an overall inactivity in innovation of ethos and approach with regard to the potential of PE to make a significant contribution to child health and welfare. What is now required is a radical change in the fundamental approach to the way in which Physical Education in its broadest sense is delivered in all UK schools, based on the time made available, the skills and knowledge of staff, the quality of provision and the freely chosen preferences for pupils. By imprinting a love of physical activity early into young people, we supply them with a roadmap for a healthy life, a way of managing stress, a base level for any physical challenge and a route into sports and other activities that can be lifelong.

Physical Education that is truly fit for 21<sup>st</sup> century purposes bears scant resemblance to the 'skill drill' lessons of former years and should reflect the many ways in which children can express themselves physically. In practice, this means using nature and the outside environment as well as sports-specific environments, the role of play, dance, music, countryside and city environments and indoor facilities. Pupils need to learn to move and thrive in all of these places, to understand environments and to recognise how their bodies react to these stimuli. PE can be a key tool in the development of robust and determined young people whose confidence is rooted in the success of their accomplishments and who have formulated strategies to succeed in both physically and mentally challenging situations.

In designing the format of 21<sup>st</sup> century PE, the essential question is 'What do we want Physical Education to do?'. This is not a specious question because for many years, the expectations, objectives and rationalisation for PE have become blurred. At its foundation, the core purpose of Physical Education today should:

1. Ensure that children are **fit** and **physically literate** (as much as numerate and literate)
2. Address their **specific needs**
3. Enable them to reach their **full potential**.

In order to realise these objectives, Physical Education must:

- Place children at the heart of every PE and sports programme
- Incorporate and keep pace with changes in educational practice
- Utilise safely the modern resources and technology now available
- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation at every level is appropriate and effective
- Link PE to healthier eating and nutritional education both at school and in home settings.

Firstly, it is important to consider the allocation of time spent delivering Physical Education in school and early years' settings. It is a matter of concern that the Department for

Education does not offer guidance on time allocation; in fact the Education Act 2002 specifically prohibits the Secretary of State for Education from prescribing the amount of time to be spent on any curriculum subject including PE (*HC Deb 15<sup>th</sup> July 2013 col 518W*). It has been said that *'DfE has a key leadership role in school sports policy. It is supported in this work by DJ and DSMS'* (*HM Gov, Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation, Dec 2015*) yet no guidance is offered on time spent teaching PE. What little guidance currently exists (not from DfE) is non-statutory. It is unenforceable and likely to encounter problems regarding implementation, which (per above) is discretionary.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills has (in the past) recommended that schools *'Increase the time given to teaching core PE each week, where this is less than two hours'* (*OFSTED 'Beyond 2012 – outstanding physical education for all. Physical Education in schools 2008-12', Reference Number 120367, Feb 2013*). Yet compelling evidence suggests that on average, within 7% of primary schools (between June - July 2014) *'pupils across all Key Stages were offered less than two hours of PE per week'* (*Youth Sports Trust; National PE, School Sport and Physical Activity Survey Report 2015*).

More recently, in its new Child Obesity Strategy, (*'Childhood Obesity; A Plan for Action', August 2016*) the Government has advised just half of the moderate to vigorous activity recommended by the UK Chief Medical Officer in 2011 by stating that *'At least 30 minutes should be delivered in school every day'* leaving the other 30 minutes to be met outside of school. In the absence of a legislative onus, it is difficult to equate this with the *'bold, decisive and urgent action'* advocated by the Health Select Committee (*Health Committee 'Childhood obesity – brave and bold action', HC 2015-16*).

The point is that we should be setting the bar high for schools. Although it has been rightly mentioned in debates that it would be completely inappropriate for the Government to *'legislate for a certain amount of exercise each day'* (*Maggie Throup MP HC Deb Jan 21<sup>st</sup> 2016 vol 604 col 1619*) a core issue seems to be that both the two hour weekly and thirty minute daily targets are far below the levels of adequacy (re actual time spent on PE) that is required to combat the health problems resulting from overweight and obesity. In her evidence to the Health Select Committee in 2015, Dr Dagmar Zeuner gives a stark account of the problem:

*'It is quite astounding how little PE is now in the curriculum'* (*Health Committee, 'Impact of physical activity and diet on health', HC 2014-15*).

As they are today, the recommendations have no legal standing and it is a matter of genuine concern as to whether schools will actually understand (let alone implement) the new 'soft' recommendations; a point made by a Health Select Committee as far back as 2004:

*'However, there is no method of compelling schools to meet this standard, and obese children often continue to opt out of activities outside the main curriculum.'*

Legislation in this matter is not the answer, but there is some merit in the Lords' findings in their investigation into behaviour change and decisions to be taken when legislating:

*'Ethical acceptability depends to a large extent on an intervention's proportionality. Proportionality can be determined by looking at the scale of the problem the intervention is designed to solve and the evidence that it will be effective in doing so. This should be weighed against ethical considerations including intrusiveness, restriction of freedom and transparency' (Science and Technology Select Committee, Behaviour Change HL 2010-12).*

There are also issues surrounding the recording of actual time spent on delivering PE in schools. Former governments required schools to *'report how much time was being spent on PE'* (Foster, Adcock, School Sport, House of Commons Briefing Paper Number 6836, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2016) however, this obligation was removed by the Coalition Government.

The importance of reporting teaching hours was emphasised by the Lords when they investigated the sporting and regeneration legacy of the London 2012 Olympics. The Upper Chamber recommended that *'the Government (to) require Ofsted to inspect and report on the time in the school day spent on PE, including 'out of hours' sports, in all school inspections'* ( HL Select Committee *'Olympic And Paralympic Legacy, Keeping the Flame Alive; The Olympic and Paralympic Legacy'*, 2014-14). In its response, the Government stated *'Ofsted's inspection arrangements are a matter for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector'* (Government and Mayor of London Response to the House of Lords Select Committee on *'Olympic and Paralympic Legacy Report: Keeping the Flame Alive; The Olympic and Paralympic Legacy'*, 2013 - 14).

In comparison with some of their European counterparts, schools in England are lagging behind in the matter of time allocation for PE. A BBC news item on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2016 stated that the Finnish Government has recommended that children should use at least three hours of their day performing physical activities and the national obesity statistics for Finland are considerably lower than those in the UK. Anneli Rautiainen, Head of Basic Education for the Finnish National Board of Education has said:

*'In our new curriculum, we are looking at two or three hours a week of physical education and more outdoor activities. But we are also looking at non-traditional ways of teaching.'*

It must be conceded that the situation re time spent teaching PE in England has improved since 2001 when the Health Select Committee heard evidence from the British Heart Foundation (including their report *'Couch Kids'*) which revealed that *'schools in England allocated less time to PE than anywhere else in the EU'* (Health Committee, Public Health HC 200-2001). However, despite the new recommendations, it is a matter of concern that time spent teaching PE in England is still lower than in many other European States (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015. *Recommended Annual Instruction Time in Full-time Compulsory Education in European 2014/15. Eurydice – Facts and Figures, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union*).

The question of funding will always be crucial when promoting PE programmes that are sustainable and capable of achieving optimum outcomes. On March 16<sup>th</sup> 2013, the then Prime Minister, David Cameron announced details of the cross-departmental (Department of Education, Department of Health, Department of Culture, Media and Sport) ring-fenced

PE and sport premium for primary schools amounting to £150 million per annum for two years.

The Conservative Manifesto then pledged to maintain this funding until 2020. This followed the controversy caused in 2010 when the Education Secretary *'announced that the Coalition Government was lifting the requirements of the previous Government's PE and Sport Strategy and would end ring-fenced funding for School Sport Partnerships'*, (Foster, Adcock, School Sport, House of Commons Briefing Paper Number 6836, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2016).

David Cameron would later go on record as saying that the reason for the cuts was economical, asserting in a televised interview:

*'The trouble we have had with targets up to now, which was two hours a week, is that a lot of schools were meeting that by doing things like Indian dance or whatever, that you or I probably wouldn't think of as sport, so there's a danger of thinking all you need is money and a target. If that was the solution, we would have solved this problem by now.'* (The Daily Telegraph, 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2012).

Recent data indicates that dance accounted for 23% of *'the most commonly mentioned new activities in curricular PE since the introduction of the premium'*, (Department of Education, *'The PE and sport premium: an investigation in primary schools'*, research report, November 2015) and in fact, *'dance or aerobics'* was a key recommendation of the 2004 Health Select Committee as a way of *'diversifying'* and broadening engagement in PE (Health Select Committee, Obesity, HC 2004).

The termination of the Coalition Government's PE and Sports Strategy funding has been raised in debates on numerous occasions:

*'The first thing this Government did was cut the funding for the sports partnerships and although some funding has now been returned after a national outcry, the current provision is a shadow of its former self, with many posts lost and many of the initiatives gone'*, (HL Deb, 14<sup>th</sup> June 2012, vol 737 col 1460).

However, the benefits of the Sports Premium are numerous, including increasing the average time doing sports from 78 minutes to 111 minutes in *'schools who reported doing less than two hours prior to the introduction of the premium'* (Department of Education, *'The PE and sport premium: an investigation in primary schools'*, research report, November 2015) and a strong case can be made for extending its application to other opportunities for physical activity such as play.

What must be essential is that in whatever way in which this funding stream evolves, it is **secured and developed** rather than being continually subject to limited time spans and as yet, the Government's messaging is ambiguous. Former Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, stated in his 2016 Budget that the school sports premium would be increased to £320 million per year from September 2017, financed via *'a new soft drinks industry levy to help tackle childhood obesity'* (HM Treasury, Budget 2016). On 11<sup>th</sup> September 2016, the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Civil Society in Theresa May's

administration, Rob Wilson MP, announced ‘an £80 million boost for England’s youth sector’ until 2020; this will be divided into a new Youth Investment Fund and the existing *Step up to serve#iwill youth social action campaign*. The proposed funding is reported to include ‘sports, drama and voluntary work’ (BBC 11<sup>th</sup> September 2016) but as of yet, there has been no mention of the PE and sport premium. Announcing the 2015 ‘*Sporting Future*’ strategy, the Parliamentary under Secretary for Sport, Tourism and Heritage, Tracey Crouch MP said:

*‘Through this strategy, Government is redefining what success in sport means, with a new focus on five key outcomes: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development. In future, funding decisions will also be made on the basis of the social good that sport and physical activity can deliver’ (HC 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 2015 vol 603 col 95WS).*

It is now important that those involved in designing/delivering Physical Education programmes (including sporting activity) should be assured by the Government that the PE and sport premium will be maintained, developed and increased as resources allow instead of facing an uncertain and short-term future. Engaging children and young people in PE requires **long term and consistent commitment** from governments. Without secure and consistent funding streams, policy announcements and stated objectives will be extremely unlikely to effect beneficial change.

The PE sector itself has an important role to play in influencing government and here, imaginative partnership working is vital. In 2006, a significant paper (*‘The Changing Status of School Sport & Physical Education’*, Houlihan and Green, Loughborough University 2006) outlined a number of issues likely to raise the status of PE. These include:

- The ability of leading PE organisations to work together to articulate the benefits of PE and school sport
- The difficulties in reaching a consensus around the subject when it inherently contains a potential clash of values (e.g. between the elitist outcome of sport and the universalist orientation of physical education), (Lee; *‘Values in physical education and sport: a conflict of interest?’*, *British Journal of Teaching Physical Education* 35(1), 2004)
- The institutional weakness of the government department in which sport and PE primarily reside (DCMS)
- The concern that Physical Education in, and of itself, is still not valued as an important part of the curriculum, but only as a tool to achieve broader educational and societal objectives, e.g. academic improvement, improved behaviour, community development.

In order for Physical Education to play an effective role in 21<sup>st</sup> century education, these issues must be confronted by both government and the sector. For Physical Education to have a valuable impact, it must be delivered by a well qualified profession from early years through to secondary school. Reforms are needed to initial training programmes, to ensure that sufficient time is given to prepare teachers to deliver appropriate PE to foster physical literacy, as well as ongoing professional development for qualified teachers to keep practice relevant and as modern as possible throughout a teaching career. One way to address this

at primary level is for schools to employ PE Specialists (with Qualified Teacher Status) across a number of primary schools, whose purpose is to deliver world leading PE across the school and up skill colleagues through mentoring and shared teaching. Physical Education should be an entitlement of all pupils through to the end of their education with increased personalisation to meet individual preference and need. It will therefore require a force of well-skilled practitioners who are experienced in innovative curriculum design.

Traditional, competitive team sport is not enough to foster child engagement with physical wellbeing and a more inclusive and diverse approach is long overdue:

*'Where PE might make a difference seems likely to be restricted, for the most part, to those youngsters already predisposed toward sport and active recreation' (Green, 2014 'Mission impossible? Reflecting upon the relationship between physical education, youth sport and lifelong participation', Routledge - Sport, Education and Society, 19:4, 357-375).*

With informal sports and exercise making up the largest percentage of physical activity performed by children aged 5-15 (both sexes) there is a clear physical engagement gap between the national curriculum and a genuine and early interest in physical activity which aids sustainable health improvements. According to the 2012 Health Survey for England (*'Health Survey for England 2012 Ch3 Physical Activity in Children'*) formal sporting activities for boys stood at just 48% with a meagre 38% for girls. However, a different picture emerges when we see that the 2016 GCSE grades for PE (consisting of 68.4% A-C) are on a par with the A-C grades for 2016 in curriculum core subjects English (60.2%), English Literature (75.1%) and Mathematics (61.0%). Clearly something in the school PE offer as a whole is not operating as it should and this is supported by 24% of respondents to the Government's 2013 consultation over proposals for a new national curriculum:

*'The PE curriculum was not coherent and might exclude some pupils' (Department of Education, 'Reforming the National Curriculum in England: Summary report of the July – August 2012 consultation on the new programmes of study and attainment targets from September 2014').*

The engagement situation is bleaker for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who comprise *'15.4% of pupils in schools in England' (Department of Education, 'Special educational needs in England SEN': January 2015)*. This figure includes non-maintained schools as SEN *'records information on those children for whom the local authority is responsible, regardless of whether they are in the local authority's own maintained schools, in the non-maintained independent sectors or educated outside of school' (Department for Education 'SEN Quality use and Methodology,' Jan 2015).*

A study published in 2013 found that *'over half of disabled people surveyed (51%) are not enjoying their experiences of sport in school, compared to 68% enjoying taking part in sport or physical activity with friends outside of school' (National Federation for Disability Sport, 'Disabled People's Lifestyle' report: September 2013).*

This is a valid concern. It is not acceptable for 21st century PE programmes to treat activities for disabled children as an 'add on'; all children must be offered opportunities to participate at their own pace in activities that are inclusive and personalised.

In some other countries (such as Australia) there is a growing awareness of the need to design specific programmes for children with disabilities to afford them the best Physical Education experience. Craig Smith who works with autistic children describes some successful activities:

*'Some of the things we currently do in this regard is to get our students taking Lego characters into the garden and using iPad to photograph them and create comic stories, which gives students an exposure to the joy of being in the garden and crawling around the grass... we also use robotics like Sphero, a robotic ball controlled by iPad, that we use to encourage our students to drive it around the school (while they walk around the school) in order to create maps of the school, identifying spaces in which they can play with friends, in which they can find quiet places to sit and read, to identify where the canteen is, and so on, as a sort of social story orienteering exercise.... Without this utilisation of special interests, our students find it very hard to understand the motivation for engaging in Physical Education at school'* ([csmith@autismspectrum.org.au](mailto:csmith@autismspectrum.org.au) 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2016)

The issue of evaluation in PE must also be addressed. For England, the Department of Education has stated that the aims of the National Curriculum for Physical Education are to ensure that all pupils:

- Develop competence in a broad range of physical activities
- Are physically active for sustained periods of time
- Engage in competitive sports and activities
- Lead healthy, active, lives.

However, currently there is no consistent method through which to evaluate whether individual pupils are achieving these aims. In recent years, closely aligned with the undesirable trend towards increased obesity and physical inactivity, there have been calls for Physical Education testing in schools, chiefly around pupil fitness testing. The Association for Physical Education (AfPE) has cautioned against fitness testing on the grounds that there is some evidence that fitness testing can militate against achieving the activity level goals for certain children and that some fitness testing models already operating in some schools may even depress children's confidence levels. A possible way forward would be to follow Wales and place emphasis in the curriculum upon the development of **physical literacy and competence**. The Dragon Challenge (described earlier) is one such assessment tool that could be used nationally to measure children's learning, inform the curriculum and drive a change of thinking about the purpose of physical education. With increased information to hand about a child's physical literacy development, teachers could better develop an individualised approach to the design of each child's physical education programme; thus 'following the child' rather than rolling out an inflexible 'catch all' system.

A further issue that must be factored into a 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to Physical Education is the prominence and use of modern technology. The downside to young people in having

access to a plethora of technological opportunities is captured by a government-commissioned Foresight Report (*Government Office for Science, 'Tackling Obesities: Future Choices' 2007*) in which identification of a causative effect between the technological advances of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and '*an obesogenic environment*' are made. Since publication of the 2007 report, countless scientific studies and policy papers have linked the use of specific technology to the causal matrix of obesity, this is now widely accepted and beyond refute.

However, the PE and sporting landscape now includes interactive television computer gaming as well as a host of online tools and websites. Better use of digital platforms can be important in driving the change from passive consumption to active participation. Social media also has the potential to shift young people's sedentary consumption of sport into active participation. Online platforms and mobile phone applications can allow people to monitor activity and progress as well as enabling them to compare their activity with friends and peers. It is certainly advisable to proceed with caution and be alert to avert the possibility of addiction, but there is sufficient evidence to warrant further investigation into the use of technology in promoting physical activity within a PE context.

Writing in the British Medical Journal (*BMJ, August 2016*) Margaret McCartney GP enthuses about the game *Pokémon Go* as being attractive to players '*who want to be healthy*' and Deirdre Harrington of the University of Leicester speaks in a similar vein to '*The Daily Mail*':

*'Experts often blame the amount of time people spend in front of screens for people not being active enough...Perhaps we can use screens as part of the solution'* (*Daily Mail, 9<sup>th</sup> August 2016*).

As the Department of Health noted in 2010, some of the new technologies coming to the fore have an increased potential to increase activity levels:

*'New interactive technologies (e.g. Nintendo's Wii console with Wii Sports, Wii Fit; games such as Rock Band, Guitar Hero) are more activity-based and have the potential to reverse the sedentary nature of interactive technology'* (*Department of Health, Sedentary Behaviour and Obesity: Review of the Current Scientific Evidence, 2010*).

One central benefit of utilising technology in this respect is that it will have the power to unite teaching staff, parents and children in a common cause. The current recommendations of 60 minutes of physical activity daily are divided between schools and parents for delivery; it would therefore be logical (and progressive) to try to harmonise these targets through a shared and familiar technological platform.

However, new technologies must be monitored and tested before their widespread adoption as part of the PE offer and those responsible for delivery must be themselves well versed in assessing risk as well as benefit in their application. The *Pokémon* augmented reality game (mentioned above) has its health professional supporters as previously noted, but has been (and continues to be) subject to controversy since its release in July 2016. By directive of the Governor of New York State, the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision prohibits sex offenders subject to community supervision from using the app or

similar games in the interests of child protection. On the same day as the issue of the directive, an open letter was sent to Niantic's Chief Executive Officer requesting assistance with technology that would somehow ban their use. In addition, a Bill has been laid before the New York State Assembly to amend a 391 New York General Business Law GBS which seeks to define augmented reality games and prohibit their developers from causing or allowing *'any in-game objective to be located at, or accessible within a one hundred foot radius of the digital location corresponding with the recorded place of residence of a sex offender as defined in Article 6-C of the correction law.'*

Comprehensive government-funded research into the part that new technologies might play within a new PE curriculum is therefore essential, and best practice in the use of new technology to support pupil development of physical competence through using the variety of tools available for performance analysis must be evidence-based. However, whilst proceeding with a necessary caution, recognizing and developing effective uses of technology within PE is important given the growing number of technologies available to pupils outside of school. A range of technologies, mobile device applications and gamified exercise experiences are now largely available and extensively used, and future proactive Physical Education programmes may benefit from the effective and well planned integration of such devices.

Ensuring real progression in the development of Physical Education programmes that are fit for 21st century purposes will not be easy, but the reward in terms of people who are healthy and active throughout the life course is great indeed. In conclusion it is important to make the following observations:

- Engaging children and young people in PE requires **long term and consistent commitment** from governments and also an active partnership between government, the sector and parents. Over the past 30 years, the sector has experienced a myriad of approaches (and funding streams) designed to stem the tide of inactivity in schools. However, these have all too frequently taken the form of large cash injections which are then cut off after only a few years (to be replaced by a new strategy)
- If PE is regarded as providing solutions for a variety of objectives (e.g. increasing academic attainment, improving behaviour), it should be valued as such. It should have the same status, credibility and funding as the core academic subjects and this could include ensuring that the PE offer is measured by Ofsted in the same way as core curriculum subjects
- If PE is to be treated on an equal basis with other subjects in the curriculum, care must be taken in assessing children's physical literacy, using nationally prepared guidelines that do not undermine a child's confidence and inhibit them from participating **according to their own pace and individual needs** in Physical Education programmes.

If these principles underpin a 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to Physical Education, it is likely that girls who pester their teacher to 'let them off' PE (as described at the beginning of this Report) will be replaced by enthusiastic, active young people like those enjoying the School Gym at Dyffren Taf School in Carmarthenshire.

It is a worthy aim and one that can and must be achieved.

## **Recommendations**

- 8.1 A specialist teacher workforce for PE from early years settings through to secondary schools**
- 8.2 Increased time on PE in initial teacher training programmes and continual professional training for qualified teachers**
- 8.3 Direct recommendations re time spent teaching PE to come from the Department of Education**
- 8.4 'Physical literacy' models of assessment in schools to be formulated on an individualised basis; physical activity data to be included annually in the Health and Social Care Information Centres Health Survey for England**
- 8.5 Government-funded research into use of new technology within a PE context; evidence-based examples of good practice to be published and widely cascaded PE and time spent on PE to be part of a school's Ofsted assessment**
- 8.6 Sector/government partnership in designing a new curriculum for PE with a strong emphasis on personalisation and in which the needs of disabled children are fully met**
- 8.7 Create a new team in every school which is dedicated to promoting all types of physical activity (ideally linked to the catering/nutrition team), PE, sports staff and play staff would all be part of the team; each offering the children a choice of opportunities from increased daily activity. Train the team to deliver a full range of beneficial activities, under the supervision of the qualified team leader (likely to be a specialist PE teacher with a sound understanding of play and specific training in play will be essential)**
- 8.8 Sports, PE and play to be funded and prioritised equally within the same pot of money, as a holistic, combined intervention within a 'whole school' approach**
- 8.9 Sports facilities both outdoor and indoor and fit-for-purpose equipment to form an essential component of the PE offer in all educational settings**
- 8.10 Play materials should be sourced separately and include 'loose parts' objects.**