

Inquiry into Preventative Spending

The Scottish Sports Association (SSA) thanks the Finance Committee for the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry.

The SSA is the independent voice for sports governing bodies in Scotland. We represent their interests and currently have 55 full members and 17 associate members. The governing bodies of sport are responsible for the governance, development and delivery of their individual sports and provide a formal structure for over 12,000 sports clubs in Scotland. Many of these organisations are run on a not for profit basis and are managed by volunteers. They provide coaching, competition and youth participation development opportunities to their local communities and most of the 150,000 people who volunteer in sport do so within the club structure.

This paper will demonstrate ways in which focussed expenditure on sport has and can further contribute to solutions which will help to prevent negative social outcomes, by making improvements to Scotland's health, our communities and our education.

Government spending on sport has a direct economic impact on local communities, which in the current economic climate is vital to the ongoing survival of local businesses. Through EventScotland¹, government has supported sports events such as the annual Mountainbike World Cup in Fort William. The local economic impact was £700,000 from an investment of £83,000 to support this event in 2008. An investment of £25,000 in the 2008 Melrose Sevens generated £1.5 million for the local area. These are only two of many examples where investment in sports events generates income for local economies, which will help to secure employment and prosperity. Without the money generated through these events, local people across Scotland would be negatively affected possibly leading to increased local unemployment.

Health

The BHF National Centre for Physical Activity and Health² reports that physical inactivity cost the NHS across the UK £1.06 billion in 2002³. Sport and physical activity participation plays a role in both the prevention and management of a number of illnesses, of which susceptibility increases with age. These include⁴:

- Cardiovascular disease
- Hypertension
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Certain cancers
- Osteoporosis

The US Surgeon General reported that physical activity 'reduces the risk of premature mortality in general'⁵. Approximately 2,500 people in Scotland die each year due to physical inactivity. It is

estimated that increasing physical activity levels by 1% for 5 years would save 157 lives per year with a positive economic impact of £85 million⁶.

The financial impact on the NHS of dealing with these conditions is an area for concern given the projected significant increase in the elderly population of Scotland⁷. Obesity was considered to cost Scotland's NHS £171m in 2003⁸. However, the prevalence of obesity has continued to increase since 2003, with alarming increases in children⁹. The National Osteoporosis Society states that "1 in 2 women and 1 in 5 men will suffer a fracture after the age of 50". The economic impact of hip fractures alone, across the UK, is estimated to be £1.7 billion per year¹⁰. Diabetes affects approximately 210,000 people in Scotland and is strongly linked with obesity¹¹. It is clear that health conditions associated with physical inactivity are increasing which will create a greater burden on NHS Scotland health budgets in years to come.

One example of a sports programme which is showing increasing participation rates is Scottish Athletics' **jogscotland** programme. Since 2007, **jogscotland** membership has increased from 10,000 to almost 16,000. This programme costs Scottish Athletics approximately £275,000 per year to deliver and has proved to be a massive success with particularly female runners which make up roughly two thirds of the membership. In considering latest figures which show that female physical activity participation is unlikely to reach targeted levels by 2020, it is important that programmes such as these are prioritised and supported. The impact upon physical, mental and social well-being that participation in programmes such as **jogscotland** offers can contribute towards preventing negative health outcomes associated with ageing as shown above.

Communities

In its report to the Government's Active Communities Unit, the CCPR highlighted the contribution of sport to the objectives of the unit in relation to the role of volunteers in sport. Sports clubs offer opportunities for both social interaction and the development of social capital which benefit the wider community¹². Building social capital creates a sense of local identity¹³. There is evidence which suggests that higher levels of capital are associated with better health and lower crime¹⁴. The Scottish Office reported that people are more likely to play active roles in their community if they are involved in sports and cultural activities¹⁵. However, it has been argued that sport's role in tackling negative social outcomes is greatest when undertaken within a partnership approach¹².

Sports initiatives through the 'Cashback for Communities' scheme are showing great promise in tackling issues of social exclusion and re-engaging disaffected youth in education and promoting health. Basketball, Football and Rugby have all been delivering Cashback programmes for over one year while Athletics, Badminton, Hockey, Squash and Tennis have recently received funding.

Delivering programmes on behalf of Basketball Scotland, Scottish Sports Futures offers 'Education through Sport' programmes: Jump2it and Twilight Basketball. Jump2it has been delivered across 130 Scottish primary schools to promote active healthy lifestyles to combat the growing trend of childhood obesity. The programme targets areas of high social deprivation and uses basketball to entice youngsters to participate. It combines physical activity with health education, which highlights the dangers of poor diet, smoking and alcohol abuse - all of which contribute to Scotland's health problems and add strain to our NHS budgets.

Basketball Scotland facilitates the long-term participation of the youngsters engaged in these programmes by providing pathways, along with Active Schools teams, for youngsters to join local clubs in their communities. Out of 780 participants surveyed, a massive 87% are now participating in more sport as a result of engaging in Jump2it. Fourteen new basketball clubs have been started and 10,000 youngsters have participated.

Cashback programmes offered by the Scottish Football Association (SFA) and Scottish Rugby Union (SRU) saw a partnership approach with the Community Safety Partnership bear success in reducing crime in the Scottish Borders. Street Football and Street Rugby were delivered in a multi-sport pilot at Common Haugh Car Park in Hawick as a diversionary activity which also offered a health information service. Both the SFA and SRU provided pathways for participants to local clubs to foster their participation further.

Lothian & Borders Police produced an analysis of the impact of the Street Rugby programme and found that the number of calls received on Friday nights fell to levels similar to those received midweek. The reduction in calls received during hours when Street Rugby was offered also confirmed that the activity was successfully diverting youths from anti-social behaviour.

A fantastic example of a sports club impacting on its local community is the North Lanarkshire Scramble and Quad Bike Club. Recognising their community responsibilities, the club took action to reduce the level of illegal off-road motorcycling in the area. Local authority complaint levels fell from over 7000 to little over 1000 in one year, having a positive impact on the police manpower required to tackle the issue.

In a partnership with Lothian & Borders and Strathclyde Police, the club achieved an 88% reduction in police calls relating to this problem. This not only highlights that those engaging in this activity were doing so illegally, but that by providing a safe and legal alternative area for them to ride helped the local community and increased club membership. The club has been recognised for their positive community impact in numerous awards; most significantly, the Labour Party Award for Social Inclusion and Cohesion in Communities in the UK in 2007 and the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, also in 2007.

These are only some of the many examples of how investment in sport positively impacts on local communities and provides the opportunities for social capital and cohesion. Volunteers in sport are estimated to be worth £247million annually to the Scottish economy, provide an economic return of 30-1 and are the backbone of sport in Scotland¹⁶.

Education

Reviews into the wider social benefits of sport have considered the role that sport and physical activity plays in improving educational attainment. In a widely quoted study by Sallis et al. (1999), no negative effect upon educational attainment was found which confounds the belief that an increasing focus on physical activity in school impedes educational performance¹⁷. To the contrary, more recent reviews have actually found evidence of a relationship between sporting participation and improved educational attainment¹⁸.

Sport can also be used to engage young people who may be facing future social exclusion through a lack of qualifications, which can impede entry into the labour market. The SFA Schools of Football programme, supported by Cashback investment, is an example of sport re-engaging young people in areas of social deprivation. Daily football training is added to the regular curriculum of 282 pupils in nine schools. This player-centred initiative focuses on the educational, social and football development of pupils. Now in its third year, the programme has seen improvements in pupils attendance, behaviour, attainment and motivation.

Another example is research by the Scottish Office¹⁹, which highlighted an example of a sports-centred programme engaging and improving the future prospects of 12 young people who were expected to leave school at the first opportunity without qualifications. These youngsters engaged in a Junior Sports Leader award programme which also included job preparation training and sessions on drug and vandalism awareness. Upon completion of the programme, 6 members of the group entered employment or apprenticeships while the other 6 stayed on in education. This is an example of how sport can be used as part of the solution to prevent the future social exclusion of young people in Scotland.

The most recent success of sport in this endeavour has been the Future Jobs Fund programme. In one of many examples, Scottish Hockey employed 9 young people aged 16-24 years, who had been unemployed and socially excluded for over 6 months, as assistant coaches. As part of this programme, all 9 coaches undertook training and qualifications which are mapped to the Scottish Credits and Qualifications Framework, improving their confidence and employability. Overall, 25 percent of young people employed in sport through Future Jobs Fund have now entered permanent full-time employment.

Conclusion

Sport is by no means the magic solution to all of Scotland's social problems. However, it can and should play a role in helping to tackle issues that affect the people of Scotland. Issues of obesity, diabetes and other health conditions, educational attainment, crime prevention and social exclusion are all areas where sport has and can make a contribution. Highlighted throughout this paper are only some of the examples where investing money now will make an invaluable contribution to Scotland's future. The examples here give an insight how sports programmes are contributing to tackling and preventing health problems, improving educational opportunities and increasing skills for employment, which are key issues in overcoming social exclusion. Investment now, in these, and similar programmes, will help Scotland save money in the future by contributing towards preventing these negative social outcomes.

The Scottish Sports Association strongly urges the Committee to consider the facts presented here and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss these further, along with other examples, with the Committee as it considers evidence for its Inquiry.

References

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