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Y Gweinidog dros Dreftadaeth
Minister for Heritage



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Ein cyf/Our ref MB/AJ/166/08

Andrew R T Davies AM
National Assembly For Wales
Cardiff Bay
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21st October 2008

Dear Andrew,

During the recent plenary session held on 1st October, I promised to write to you concerning the progress being made in relation to the One Wales commitment to 'develop opportunities for schools and colleges to work with sports clubs and invest further in sports coaching'.

As you know, the aspiration to create a more active and healthier Wales is the primary goal and in order to achieve this, an appropriately qualified workforce is essential if we are to be able to deliver the range and quality of opportunities needed to help get people active. If children and young people are to be encouraged to adopt healthy, active lifestyles the quality of their experiences will largely rely on the ability of the coach or instructor. The same is true if we are to produce greater numbers of sports stars over the coming years.

These principles underpin the £5 million investment made through the Sports Council in the Coaching Plan since 2005/6 to create more coaches and better coaches. The outcomes of this investment are currently under review and the Sports Council will be reporting to my officials shortly. However, the findings will firstly be considered as part of a wider review to be undertaken during the next 6 months of the provision in Wales for creating sporting excellence.

In the meantime, it is important to note the current ongoing work in this area and to emphasise that this is only one element of a comprehensive approach to developing sport and physical activity opportunities for young people that encompasses a number of the One Wales commitments.

The Dragon Sport programme for 7 to 11 year olds has been going now for 8 years and is currently running in 95% of primary schools. It continues to develop more leaders and coaches from the volunteer workforce to help deliver both school based and community club activities in eight key sports. The latest report shows over 6,600 leaders across Wales are helping to run Dragon Sport Clubs during extra curricular time (of which just over 2,400 are teachers).

In contrast, the 5x60 extra curricular programme for 11 to 16 year olds has only been operating for 2 years but this September was extended from 56% of secondary schools to 96% of all schools across Wales. This has had a significant impact on participation levels in

this age group and consequently a big increase in the demand for suitably qualified coaches and instructors in order to deliver the diverse range of activities that the young people have identified that they would like to do.

Current Sports Council managed Community Chest and Minor Grant funding awards continue to assist with supporting coach education and there are also several innovative schemes now in place that are helping to meet the demand for coaches. These include partnerships between local authorities, universities, colleges and schools where leaders and coaches are deployed as part of their course programme to help deliver Dragon Sport and 5x60 activities as well as other community based activities. The younger leaders develop a wide range of skills as part of the requirement towards courses like Sports Leaders UK, Duke of Edinburgh or Welsh Baccalaureate and as they become old enough are supported to pursue further coaching awards as part of a coach accreditation scheme where they can work on a formal basis for the local authority and further develop their skills and knowledge and possibly become our senior coaches of the future.

There are still a number of issues that must be tackled including the implementation of the UK Coaching Framework and sources of funding to support the training of our volunteer coaching workforce. We also need better tracking and deployment of coaches in order to ensure that any investment in coach development is providing us with value for money. However, all these issues are currently under the spotlight and my officials and their colleagues in the Sports Council are working together to deal with them.

Ultimately, the forthcoming Physical Activity Action Plan will identify and deal with the coaching/instructor issues surrounding the participation agenda and the review of Performance & Excellence Sport will inform policy and future strategy in relation to the requirements of coaching at the elite level. We are therefore working hard as a government, with our partners, to continue to support coaching development and further enhance the infrastructure needed to encourage both participation and excellence in sport.

I hope that this is useful in clarifying the current situation in relation to the development of coaches in Wales.



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