

Elements of Engagement

Creating an Active, Healthy and Vibrant Wales

BACKGROUND

Over the past four years the Sport Wales Insight team has undertaken and commissioned a wide range of research in order to advance the sector's understanding of the sport and physical activity landscape in Wales.

This research has involved:

- Over 8,000 survey responses from adults & 116,000 survey responses from young people on their sporting behaviours, preferences & experiences.
- Interviews and focus groups with 97 adults and young people from BME communities across Wales, plus intensive qualitative research with 14-21 year olds exploring the factors surrounding their participation and non-participation.

The breadth and depth of data gleaned from this research is vast, and collectively it has provided us with a wealth of insight and intelligence that sheds a light on almost every corner of our nation. Yet within this mass of data certain themes, patterns and corollaries consistently emerge. These themes fall into five inter-related areas which taken together explain why engagement in sport continues to vary so significantly across our population.

The five '*Elements of Engagement*' are as follows:

Motivation: An inner desire or drive. 'The energy for action'.

We're not forcing anybody to take part in physical activity, and the evidence shows that trying to do so has the opposite effect. Instead, we want people to choose physical activity for themselves. Since rational information and logic is not sufficient to do this we must *make it as compelling as possible by appealing directly to people's identities*.

What does the evidence say?

- Adults who would like to do more sport but lack motivation (i.e. say that they would do it if they 'could be bothered to make the effort') are 35% less likely to be 'hooked on sport' than those who do not identify 'motivation' as an issue (Active Adults 2014).
- Over 83,000 'non-hooked' adults say that they would do more sport 'if they could be bothered to make the effort' (8.3% of those with a latent demand). (Active Adults Survey 2014)
- The findings from qualitative research with Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities across Wales indicates that an awareness of the health benefits of exercise does not automatically translate into participation.

Confidence: A belief in one's ability to take part, to attain a high level of performance or to achieve desired goals, and a sense of certainty that doing so will be worthwhile.

Those that are overwhelmed by fears and doubts are unlikely to engage in sport or achieve their desired goals. It is essential therefore that we *foster a sense of competence, instil belief and cultivate a climate of possibility.*

What does the evidence say?

- Pupils who are confident in trying new activities without worrying are twice as likely to be 'hooked on sport' than those who are not (School Sport Survey 2015).
- Adults who lack confidence are 26% less likely to be 'hooked on sport'. While those who consider their sporting ability to be 'much better than most' are 9x more likely to be 'hooked' (Active Adult Survey 2014).
- Findings from our research with BME communities highlighted that in many cases a desire to take part in sport was undermined by a lack of confidence. For the respondents in this study this was predominantly the result of insufficient language skills &/or a lack of social connections.

Awareness: Knowing when, where and how to take advantage of relevant opportunities.

Inspiration is wasted without basic knowledge of what is available. We must find a way to *make the invisible, visible.*

What does the evidence say?

- 'During the focus group, the British Bangladeshi female said she would like to play more dodgeball. One of the Ambassadors was able to tell her that the school already has male and female dodgeball teams; clearly there is a difference between availability and awareness even in a small close-knit community like a school.' (Sport Wales' BME research 2015)
- Over 83,000 'non-hooked' adults say that they would do more sport 'if they knew where to go and learn' (8.3% of those with a latent demand). (Active Adults Survey 2014)

Opportunity & Resources: Opportunities are available and can be easily accessed.

Inspired and informed individuals must have the resources that are required to take advantage of an opportunity. If the opportunity places too much of a demand on their time, their energy or their money they are unlikely to take advantage of the offer. We must make *sport/physical activity the easy option.*

What does the evidence say?

- Respondents involved in the qualitative research with BME communities in Wales highlighted a range of factors that influenced their participation/non-participation. These included car ownership, proximity to opportunities, cost, family commitments, and long/irregular work hours.

The Experience: The experience is worthwhile. It reinforces one's motivation & confidence and increases the likelihood of continued engagement.

The quality of the sporting experience will determine the likelihood of the participant returning by increasing or decreasing their motivation and confidence for the future. High quality, rewarding experiences that meet people's needs are crucial for sustaining engagement. We must *give people a reason to go again*.

What does the evidence say?

- Pupils are 5x more likely to be 'hooked on sport' if they enjoy extra-curricular sport (School Sport Survey 2015).
- Pupils are 9x more likely to enjoy P.E. 'a lot' if their ideas about school sport are always listened to (School Sport Survey 2015).
- Respondents from our BME research have described positive sporting experiences as ones in which they feel 'welcomed', 'valued', 'supported' and 'included'. (Sport Wales BME research 2015)

FAQs:

- **Why are they called the ‘Elements of Engagement’?**

- The name reflects the fact that people’s needs are at the forefront of the approach.
- The tool provides a common language for dialogue, collaboration and knowledge exchange across sectors. This will be critical if we wish to bring new voices to the table and stimulate innovation.
- The word ‘elements’ indicates that the five areas are not ‘black or white’ but exist on a continuum, i.e. there are varying levels of confidence, motivation, awareness etc.
- The name (‘elements’) reflects the fact that the five areas are critical at all stages of a sporting pathway (across ‘The Four Worlds’), regardless of sporting ability.

- **How do the ‘Elements of Engagement’ relate to Sporting Pathways/‘The Four Worlds’?**

We want to ensure that people engage in sport/physical activity regardless of their current level of ability or their primary reason for taking part. This means that the five elements need to be cultivated or addressed at *all* stages of a sporting pathway (across all ‘Four Worlds’).

- **What is the difference between ‘Physical Literacy’ and the ‘Elements of the Engagement’?**

The definition of Physical Literacy provided by Margaret Whitehead (2016) is:

“the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.”

The ‘Elements of Engagement’ is a behaviour change model that also acknowledges the importance of ‘motivation’ and ‘confidence’. It recognises that these elements are likely to vary in relation to different sporting opportunities and throughout someone’s life. Unlike ‘Physical Literacy’ the ‘Elements of Engagement’ is a holistic model which acknowledges the importance not just of an individual’s internal resources (‘motivation’, ‘confidence’) but also their external ‘opportunities & resources’ (time, money, transport, social connections, suitable opportunities for physical activity etc.) and the interaction that occurs between the two to enable or prevent ongoing engagement.

- **Why is ‘Physical Competency or Ability’ not one of the ‘Elements of Engagement’?**

We want to ensure that people can experience the benefits of sport/physical activity *regardless of their current level of ability*. Our responsibility is therefore to provide compelling, suitable and accessible opportunities that enable people to develop their physical skills as they wish.

This does NOT mean that we do not advocate the development of Physical Literacy or fundamental movement skills from a young age.

- **What do the ‘Elements of Engagement’ mean for our ‘Workforce’?**

An effective workforce (which includes volunteers, young ambassadors, parents, teachers, GPs etc.) is one which cultivates the five elements by *inspiring, informing, facilitating* and *delivering* high quality sport/physical activity experiences.

It is the responsibility of everyone working across the organisation/sector, regardless of their job title, to be contributing towards the five elements by finding better and more innovative ways of meeting our populations’ needs across these five areas.

- **How do the ‘Elements of Engagement’ relate to our work on ‘Equality’?**

Where there are inequalities in participation/engagement these are the result of inequalities across the five elements. If we wish to address these inequalities we must identify where we are failing to meet people’s needs across the five elements, and improve these areas via insight and innovation.

- **How do the ‘Elements of Engagement’ relate to our work on ‘Facilities’?**
As the name suggests, facilities are critical for facilitating engagement in physical activity/sport. The availability of facilities (and how hard they are to access) is a crucial part of ones ‘opportunities and resources’, while the quality of facilities will play a crucial part in one’s ‘experience’.
- **Shouldn’t ‘fun’/‘challenging’/‘rewarding’ be elements?**
These are all factors that may contribute to a quality ‘experience’ and ensure that someone keeps engaging in sport. It is important to remember that what a quality ‘experience’ looks like will vary from person to person.
- **Shouldn’t ‘cost’ be an element?**
Cost is a factor that relates to ones ‘opportunities and resources’. Sport Wales’ evidence indicates that the cost of accessing sport/physical activity can be a barrier to engagement.
- **Aren’t we just engaging those who already have high levels of wellbeing? What about those who have low levels of wellbeing?**
Those with low levels of wellbeing are likely to have particularly low levels of ‘motivation’ and ‘confidence’. As with any other segments of our population it will be essential to develop an understanding of these people and the best strategies for addressing their needs – especially across these two particular elements.
- **How do the ‘Elements of Engagement’ relate to the sector’s priority for ‘Sporting Innovation’?**
The innovations that will help us to advance sport/physical activity engagement amongst our population will be innovations that:
 - Make sport/physical activity more compelling (Motivation)
 - Make sport/physical activity less intimidating and generate a sense of certainty that engagement will be safe and fulfilling for the individual (Confidence)
 - Make sporting opportunities more visible (Awareness) e.g. <https://www.openactive.io/>
 - Make sporting opportunities more accessible (Opportunity & Resources)
 - Make sporting experiences more rewarding, worthwhile or fulfilling (The Experience)
- **Isn’t this the same as ‘ACE’, ‘SMILES’, ‘the C-system’, and ‘the participant journey’?**
Unlike the above the ‘Elements of Engagement’ is an all-encompassing model that is about both:
 - The individual (*motivation, confidence, awareness*) AND their environment (*opportunity & resources*). As well as the interaction between the two (*the experience*).
 - Supply (*opportunity*) AND Demand (*motivation*).
 - Starting AND sustaining participation/progression.

‘The C-system’ and ‘SMILES’ are specifically about designing and delivering quality *experiences* and may provide useful guidance for this particular ‘element’.