



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

July 2010

Authors: Huw Rees, Jeremy Morgan and Samantha Spruce

Ref: 223A2010

Review of Local Authority Partnership Agreements

Sport Wales

The principles underpinning the Local Authority Partnership Agreements are sound, but their interpretation and application are inconsistent, limiting their impact

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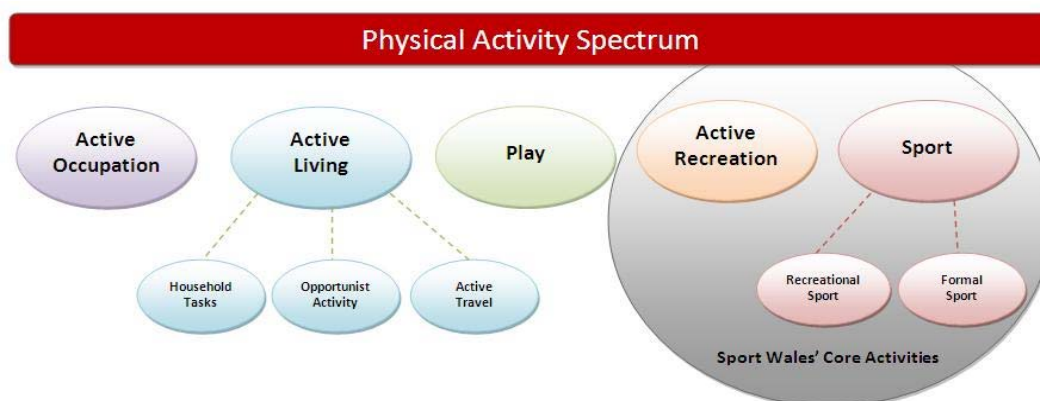
Background

1. *Climbing Higher*¹ is the Assembly Government's overarching strategy for increasing sport and physical activity in Wales. The strategy articulates the broad expectations for public funding of sport and physical activity in the context of the Assembly Government's strategic agenda and other strategic policies for health, older people, social inclusion, etc. *Climbing Higher* has been supplemented by a detailed action plan, *Creating an Active Wales*, to further drive the sport and physical activity agenda forward and provide the delivery mechanism for physical activity priorities. The action plan contains two measurable high level targets for increasing sport and physical activity, centred around the internationally accepted standard for healthy physical activity of '5 x 30' (30 minutes of moderate physical activity on at least five days a week) for adults and '5 x 60' for children.
2. *Climbing Higher* has been supplemented by a number of other plans, strategies and action plans that all contribute to the sport and physical activity agenda. These include:
 - Climbing Higher Next Steps – outlines plans for investing an additional £7.8 million in sport and physical activity during 2007-08 and 2008-09;
 - Food and Fitness - Promoting Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Children and Young People in Wales Implementation Plan;
 - Play Policy Implementation Plan;
 - Walking and Cycling Action Plan;
 - Increasing Physical Activity – Wales Audit Office report
 - Increasing Physical Activity – Audit Committee report
3. As Wales' sports development and advocacy agency, Sport Wales has a leading role in contributing to achieving the *Climbing Higher* targets. Sport Wales' purpose is two-fold: to inspire more people to become and remain active for life, and to boost the performance of Wales' elite athletes, teams and coaches. Sport Wales is the Assembly Government's main advisor on sporting matters. They develop and administer programmes, and through partnership working, enable the translation of the Government's policies for sport in Wales into action.
4. Aside from Sport Wales, the cross-cutting nature of *Climbing Higher* requires a number of public, private and voluntary organisations to work together to encourage physical activity at local, regional and national levels, through a number of strategies, action plans and interventions. The complexity of the issue requires the involvement of a large number of organisations, but this also has the effect of increasing the risk of inefficiency and ineffectiveness.

¹ *Climbing Higher*, Welsh Assembly Government, 2005

5. Increasing sport and physical activity also requires the organisations to work together across a wide spectrum of settings and activities (Figure 1), ranging from organised competitive sport through to informal everyday activities such as gardening and do-it-yourself. Sport Wales' remit is centred on its core activities of working in sport and active recreation.

Figure 1 – Sport Wales' remit within the physical activity spectrum



Source: Sport Wales

6. The creation of Local Authority Partnership Agreements (LAPAs) between Sport Wales and each of the 22 local authorities in Wales is the start of a new approach to partnership working, developing and embedding shared values, common goals and joint aspirations in addressing the challenges of achieving a 'better, fitter and healthier Wales'. The LAPA approach was piloted by 10 local authorities in 2008-09 and formally introduced to all 22 local authorities in 2009-10. It is in part a response to recommendations made by the Wales Audit Office in its report on *Increasing Physical Activity* in 2007. The LAPA approach contributes to recommendations that:
 - The Assembly Government and its delivery partners, should carry out a detailed assessment of its funding strategy for supporting physical activity and delivering *Climbing Higher* targets; allowing for the flexibility to enable recipients to adapt projects to their local needs and encourage greater innovation.
 - All relevant national, regional and local plans and strategies should recognise their potential to contribute to *Climbing Higher*, and identify how they can help to achieve its targets. Local physical activity plans are likely to be most effective if developed in partnership with all relevant local authority departments as well as Local Health Boards, Sport Wales and any other relevant public, private or voluntary local organisations.
7. Through the LAPA process, Sport Wales has challenged local authorities to consider how sport and physical recreation can become an integral part of their service planning and provision. The ability of local authorities to demonstrate the implementation of cross-cutting management arrangements, and related

improvements in performance, is one of the key principles underpinning the LAPA process.

8. Beyond this, however, whilst the overall aim for Sport Wales is to positively affect the nation as a whole – a ‘one size fits all’ approach is no longer appropriate. It is intended that the LAPA provides a framework for addressing the diverse and varying needs of communities, with the philosophy of developing ‘local solutions’ to ‘local issues’.
9. The importance of the LAPA approach is set out in *Creating an Active Wales* that states that all plans need to ‘move towards addressing the broader determinants of physical activity, and support the implementation of this plan through a single local platform for physical activity planning’.

Scope

10. Sport Wales commissioned the Wales Audit Office to review the LAPA approach in 2009-10, in order to assess the extent of implementation to date and in order to inform the future development of the agreements in relation to policy directives and increasing flexibility for local decision-making. This review was focussed on two key questions:
 - Has the development and implementation of LAPAs to date set a sound foundation for local authorities to contribute towards *Climbing Higher* outcomes and targets?
 - Is the LAPA approach an appropriate model to take forward this agenda with local authorities?
11. Sport Wales designed the LAPA as a long-term approach to delivering the challenges of achieving a ‘better, fitter and healthier Wales’, and thus the review was not intended to monitor the progress of individual local authorities, or to measure the impact of LAPAs on levels of participation.

Audit approach

12. We conducted our fieldwork between October 2009 and March 2010 at a sample of eight local authorities at varying stages in the life cycle of their LAPA, (Year 1 and Year 2), of varying size and location to obtain an overview of arrangements and structures that exist across Wales. Fieldwork sites were:
 - Blaenau Gwent
 - Caerphilly
 - Cardiff
 - Flintshire
 - Swansea
 - Neath Port Talbot
 - Ceredigion
 - Gwynedd

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13. We spent two days at each local authority and speaking to a combination of both strategic and operational staff. In particular, officers contributing directly to both the Health Social Care and Well Being and the Children's and Young People's Partnership, both strategic and operational lead officers for leisure and sport, cabinet member/s with relevant portfolios, and focus groups where appropriate with officers involved in the operational delivery of sport and physical activity delivery plans. Whenever possible we also interviewed representatives from the National Public Health Service, National Governing Bodies for specific sports, Leisure Trust management and further education staff.
 14. We also carried out a desktop review of all 22 LAPAs, monitoring reports, and other relevant documentation. We interviewed other representatives from national agencies such as Sport Wales, the Assembly Government, Disability Sport Wales and the Welsh Sports Association.

Conclusions

15. As the LAPA approach is still in its infancy (see paragraph 6), with 12 local authorities still in year one and 10 in year two², it is still too early in the process to make a fair and reasoned judgement on which arrangements are the most appropriate and effective. Such a judgment would have limited value. However, it has been possible to identify potential good practice and some lessons to learn.
16. Our overall conclusion is that: the principles underpinning the LAPA process are sound. However, their interpretation and application are inconsistent limiting their impact.
17. We came to this conclusion because:
 - the principles underpinning the LAPA are sound but their influence on the physical activity agenda is variable;
 - LAPAs based on sound core principles of partnership working, flexibility of funding, clarity of roles and responsibilities and challenging existing practices;
 - but understanding of them was not always evident;
 - activity is mainly directed towards children and young people;
 - good practice has emerged in local authorities on implementing the LAPA approach;
 - inconsistent interpretation and application of LAPA by local authorities limits its potential impact on the physical activity agenda across Wales;
 - local authorities have embedded the LAPA into strategic frameworks in a variety of ways and varying levels of success;

² A two-phase implementation was undertaken for the LAPA process with 10 local authorities forming the first phase: Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Conwy, Flintshire, Neath Port Talbot, Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Swansea and Wrexham.

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- a variety of different structures exist in local authorities which present challenges in embedding the LAPA;
 - changes in structure within local authorities have presented challenges in maintaining links with the LAPA;
 - the status afforded to the LAPA varies due to the perception of relatively small budgets and levels of bureaucracy involved;
 - the LAPA process has provided a way to organise Sport Wales funding better, identify opportunities for innovation and provide clarity over working relationships;
 - Although local authorities are providing LAPA monitoring reports, the quality is variable and is generally not supported by robust performance management;
 - the quality of reporting is variable there is limited sharing of good practice;
 - performance is being measured rather than managed and frameworks do not provide effective monitoring and evaluation; and
 - there are different interpretations of the principles of the LAPA which have given rise to delivery plans of varying quality.

Recommendations

18. Our detailed findings led to a number of recommendations, mainly directed towards Sport Wales and local authorities. Appended to this report is a full list of our recommendations in the form of an action plan (Appendix 1). We have made recommendations in the following areas:
 - clarifying roles and responsibilities at national, regional and local levels;
 - putting the right governance frameworks in place;
 - challenging the allocation of both core and non-core funding;
 - improving the performance management framework;
 - improving the quality of LAPA documents;
 - identifying and sharing good practice; and
 - improving joint working and partnerships.

The principles underpinning the LAPAs are sound, but their interpretation and application are inconsistent, which is limiting the potential impact of the approach

The principles underpinning the LAPA are sound but their influence on the physical activity agenda is variable

The principles underpinning the LAPA are sound but the framework within which the LAPA sits is misunderstood by some local authorities

19. The basis of the LAPA is a set of core principles that are outlined in the vision of Sport Wales. It states that 'success will require partners to challenge themselves and each other...new approaches will be required and innovation and enterprise are to be encouraged in pursuit of our common goal of increasing participation levels in sport and physical activity'.
20. Sport Wales recognises that to achieve local solutions to local problems, working in partnership with other stakeholders is paramount. The basis of the LAPA are the principles of developing effective partnerships to drive outcomes, flexibility of funding, clarity of roles and responsibilities within the delivery chain and challenging existing practices. These principles align with the principles of *Climbing Higher* and recommendations made by the Wales Audit Office and the National Assembly's Audit Committee in 2007.
21. We found that most of the local authorities we consulted agree with the core principles of the LAPA, but a corresponding wholesale understanding of its spirit was not always in evidence. We found the greatest progress in those local authorities where an understanding of the principles of the LAPA is evident. In particular, those officers with responsibility for delivering LAPA programmes feel a sense of empowerment through active endorsement at a strategic level, increased flexibility through joint provision with partners, and as a result an increased sense of making a difference. We found examples where duplicated provision is being identified, resulting in improved use of existing budgets and an increasing awareness of other providers and the communities they serve.
22. Central to the strategic framework for physical activity in Wales is the Climbing Higher Strategy and its accompanying five-year action plan, Creating an Active Wales. However, local authorities told us that they were uncertain how Sport Wales, the Assembly Government and *Climbing Higher* align. Of particular concern was the fact that the Chief Medical Officer is responsible for the physical activity agenda in Wales, but the LAPA is driven from within traditional sport and leisure services in local authorities. There is evidence that this is causing discrepancies whereby sport and physical activity are not of equal importance

amongst all potential partnering agencies. The Wales Audit Office in its 2007 report³ identified this issue and it is evident that things have not changed.

23. 'Creating an Active Wales' states that local authorities should establish local health social care and well being partnerships as lead partnerships within each local authority area for the development of Local Creating an Active Wales Plans (LCAWPs). However, even though the partnerships developed to lead on the LAPA approach fit within overall health, social care well being strategic frameworks, evidence from local authorities across Wales indicates that despite cross sector representation, there is very little evidence of a tangible contribution from this source.
24. There is also a lack of clarity whether it is Sport Wales or the Assembly Government driving the agenda forward. The Assembly Government told us that there was still some uncertainty about how effectively the LAPA approach was delivering the Climbing Higher agenda as intended, as few local authorities were making direct links to Climbing Higher targets. The Welsh Sports Association, the body that supports and represents the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport and physical recreation in Wales was confused over who provided overall leadership. The Federation for Disability Sport Wales told us that they were removed from the LAPA process and had very little to do with its design and implementation. This theme is a continuation from our 2007 report on increasing physical activity.
25. Creating an Active Wales does little to provide clarity on leadership. It states that Sport Wales is to 'support' the process of producing local authority LCAWPs, but that the guidance on the production of the next generation of LCAWPs 'will be developed by the Assembly Government', even though this was done by Sport Wales for the first generation.

The influence of the LAPA on physical activity levels is prioritised by Sport Wales towards children and young people

26. The LAPA remit reflects Sport Wales' strategically targeted approach to sport and physical recreation primarily amongst children and young people, with key areas of core funding attributed to it (see Figure 1). This remit is narrower than that of the *Climbing Higher* strategy that covers the entire physical activity spectrum.
27. This narrower focus of the LAPA has encouraged the traditional sport and physical activity service in local authorities to take the lead on the agenda in the first instance. This arrangement again raises the risk of health being disenfranchised from the process, since Sport Wales has stipulated their modus operandi as that of increasing participation in sport and recreation by young people. We found that this scenario was a particular issue in one local authority that we consulted. To bring fully engaged health representatives into the process required a great deal of discussion and convincing, and at the time of our fieldwork, there were still unresolved tensions at an operational level.
28. There are six key themes identified in Sport Wales' LAPA model:

³ *Increasing Physical Activity*, Wales Audit Office, 2007, page 22

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- Active Lifestyles
 - Developing Places
 - Developing People
 - Sport
 - Active Young People
 - Policy
29. The perception evident from consulting local authorities was that the spread of funding linked to these themes is not equitable. Local authorities generally held the view that Sport Wales had changed their funding priorities by narrowing the activities that it supports.
30. In Sport Wales' Corporate Plan for 2009-11, the stated aims are to increase levels of participation in sport by children and young people in Wales, and give children and young people the skills and confidence to take part in sport through the provision of high quality physical education and the effective delivery of physical literacy. This also forms part of Sport Wales' Business Plans for 2009-10 and 2010-11 with the bulk of the funding emanating from 'young people' programme funding.
31. Sport Wales' Framework Strategy⁴ stipulates that it will endeavour to deliver higher levels of activity through a concerted partnership approach to achieve the health improvement or meet the challenging targets set out in *Climbing Higher*. A common agenda, shared priorities and clear framework and messages are required to enable different agencies to work effectively towards a common goal. The Development Menu states two key priorities:
- *Targeting young people*. A good deal of progress has been made to date but significantly more needs to be done if we are to change lifelong habits and bring about a cultural shift.
 - *Reducing the number of sedentary adults* (currently around 44 per cent of adults in Wales). We need to encourage them to begin to be active regularly.
32. Active Adults is a key theme of Sport Wales yet LAPA funding is heavily weighted towards children and young people allowing local authorities little discretion to target adults even if this is identified as a local need. Sport Wales needs to communicate to local authorities their rationale for their choice of targeting.
33. There is no evidence to suggest that Sport Wales has reviewed whether local authorities are targeting their priority groups appropriately and whether they are directing funds to the right audiences. For example, demographic and gender profiles of levels of sport and physical activity may show that levels are particularly low amongst girls of a certain age. There is also a potential barrier for some local authorities where the balance of demographics would naturally dictate more activities be directed towards adults. For example, in Ceredigion the number of people who are over 25 forms a significant proportion of the total population and is recognised as the hardest to reach. However, the combination of both core

⁴ *Framework for the delivery of sport and physical activity*, Sports Council for Wales, 2005

and non-core funding does not represent the proportionality of the demographics that Ceredigion serves. This is considered inequitable by the local authority.

34. Sport Wales grant money delivered through the LAPA is therefore not necessarily targeting local target groups. This concern was also raised by the Assembly Government which is aware that there is tension between what local authorities want to do with LAPA funding and how it fits with Sport Wales' priority groups.

Sport Wales could use its influence over strategies adopted by National Governing Bodies more effectively at a local level to assist in improved joint working to support the LAPA

35. Sport Wales has a significant influence over the strategies adopted by National Governing NGBs in Wales. Local authorities recognise this and feel that the strategic influence should be more effective at a local level to assist in improved joint working. There could be a role for Sport Wales to play at a regional or local level in signposting gaps in provision, for example, in pathways from schools or potential involvement in other LAPA initiatives. We noted a specific example in Caerphilly whereby a resurgence of squash in schools has occurred. This is due in part to the understanding and adoption of the principles of the LAPA at both strategic and operational levels and due to the enthusiasm of Squash Wales, the sport's Governing Body (Case Study 1).

Case Study 1 – Effective joint working arrangements between Caerphilly and Squash Wales has achieved significant increases in participation in squash in schools which is showing early signs of proliferation to other sports

Squash Wales has worked with the Workforce and Partnership Development Officer (WPDO) for Caerphilly County Borough Council's sports development division, 'Sport Caerphilly' to introduce and promote squash at schools in the area. The partnership arrangement between Squash Wales and the Council is not formal, but is deemed to be working well by both partners.

The critical success factor, driven by the LAPA approach, has been improved communication and co-operation, clarity of roles and responsibilities and shared resources and expertise between the Governing Body and both the WPDO and School Sport co-ordinators within the schools. The initial focus for provision is at primary schools and to maintain the provision into secondary schools.

Squash is not one of the largest participatory sports and is viewed as being underfunded and disadvantaged compared to other comparable sports such as tennis. It does not form part of Dragon Sport but as racquet sports are a priority focus within the Council's LAPA, there is a commitment to work with the governing body to provide new opportunities for young people.

Despite the budget available from the Governing Body being small in size it has encouraged an expansion in participation in the sport, mainly through the provision of equipment, such as mini squash walls and nets.

An initial assessment has identified a strong appetite for the sport in the county. Competition in the Pontllanfraith cluster has resulted in the creation of two teams. Sponsorship has funded trophies and Squash Wales provide certificates for achievement. The pathway to progress the sport has already begun with significant interest in after school clubs in the local leisure centre and Saturday morning clubs. Squash Wales is about to launch squash leader and teacher courses to ensure the progression of the sport can be managed by Sport Caerphilly to free up the Governing Body's capacity to mainstream similar arrangements elsewhere in Wales. Sport Caerphilly staff alongside leisure centre staff received training on 1st June 2010 in Caerphilly Leisure Centre where a new club will be formed as part of the collaboration between all parties.

Due to the successful partnership with Squash Wales, partnership agreements have been formalised with other NGBs including badminton and tennis.

The newly established Community Activity Networks (CANs) will further enhance communication and co-ordination at a local level, meeting the needs of the customers and communities.

Inconsistent interpretation and application of the LAPA by local authorities limit its potential impact on the physical activity agenda across Wales

Local authorities have embedded the LAPA into strategic frameworks for increasing physical activity in a variety of different ways and with varying levels of success

36. At the time of our fieldwork, most local authorities were coming to the end of their first or second year of the LAPA. They considered it a difficult process to embed the cross-cutting principles of the LAPA over such a short period. For some local authorities the breaking down of traditional silo working will be required to deliver improvements in physical activity levels.
37. However, there is evidence that this is starting to happen in some local authorities where they had grasped the spirit of the LAPA. Some outcomes are being delivered such as working in partnership with internal stakeholders to break down traditional silos and with both internal and external partners (Case Study 2).
38. There were instances where leisure centres had historically operated in a silo and were considered parochial. They focussed on the level of income they could generate to operate with levels of local subsidy rather than collectively contributing towards initiatives intended to increase participation in their local communities. This has led to tensions between the leisure and sports development staff and raised difficulties in reaching agreement on reduced rates for activities necessary to ensure sustainability and enhance joint working.
39. These cultures have developed, but there is evidence that because of the LAPA and the need for joint working, senior officers have identified cultural differences and their resolution prioritised (case studies 2, 3 and 4).

Case Study 2 – Partnership working in Flintshire

Officers in Flintshire County Council identified cultural differences as an issue and seen as a barrier to the future success of the LAPA. The Sports Development Manager and chief officers invited both services to a series of workshops. External consultants ran these workshops to enforce an understanding of service synergy and how a combined effort could contribute to the LAPA and ultimately the Climbing Higher Strategy. Consequently, the Council is using LAPA funding to assist in the cost of training front line staff, group marketing and staff remodelling. There is evidence that staff are now working together as they had in with the new approach and 'Active Young People' brand namely 'Sport Flintshire'

Case Study 3 – Partnership working in Neath Port Talbot

Under the auspices of the LAPA the delivery group for Active Young People in Neath Port Talbot, the Physical Activity and Health Action Group first met in January 2009 and included representation from the following:

- Co-ordinator for Sport and Active living
- Celtic Community Leisure
- Local Public Health Team
- Neath Port Talbot College
- Community Development
- Sports Active Young People Co-ordinator
- Communities First Wellbeing officer
- Sport Wales
- Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service

Forty potential representatives have built up familiarity and understanding of roles and faith in each other's commitment to serve their communities. A formal process has grown out of an informal process, which is deemed one of the most successful partnerships in the borough.

Specific outcomes include:

- Age Concern lost funding for an aerobics class: this was remedied by the group securing alternative funding from Sport Wales.
- Ceased duplication of provision whereby two instructors now job share freeing up time to deliver their programme of classes and still complete other work.
- Officers serve areas better by working in the community rather than from leisure centres.
- The links with Police and Communities Acting Together (PACT) meetings in all areas are so strong they do not think of them as a separate agency.
- The Leisure Trust is providing classes at a significant discount and programme co-ordination and the extent of joint projects have significantly improved.
- The group discusses and selects bids. As a minimum, initiatives must be sustainable and have at least two partners per bid. Each bid is scored and common need across the activity areas identified to avoid duplication. They also discuss joint publicity and whether the bid is seeking to secure sufficient funds to achieve its objectives.

Outcome data indicates that a high percentage of classes are being sustained such as neighbourhood working and doorstep programmes, despite one of the Council's key sport and leisure venues being burnt down.

Case Study 4 – breaking down of traditional silo working in Swansea

In order to deliver its LAPA, the City and County of Swansea Council prioritised the breaking down of traditional silos to work in partnership with internal stakeholders.

The Council decided to put in place a hierarchical structure to ensure that operational and strategic communication, reporting lines, roles and responsibilities were clear. This structure initially brought the relevant Culture and Tourism services together which were re-branded and re-launched as 'Active Swansea'. This new approach eased previous tensions that existed between the Development and the Operational services and ensured a collective approach to the delivery of sport and physical activity.

In order to achieve a whole authority approach and raise the profile of LAPAs, some local authorities initially considered how the LAPAs contribute to their key corporate objectives. In order for this to succeed, local authorities will need to embed sport and physical recreation within the four local authority high level strategies: Community Strategy, Health Social Care and Wellbeing (HSCWB) Strategy, Local Development Plan (LDP) and the Children's and Young People's Plan (CYPP).

40. We found contrasting levels of integration of LAPA principles in the four key strategies. For example, Neath Port Talbot has recognised the potential to merge plans at both strategic and operational levels both within the Council and with external agencies such as health bodies. At the time of the review, Health Challenge Neath Port Talbot were looking to embed actions from their Sport and Active Living Strategy 2006/2015 into social services plans.
41. A similar situation exists in Ceredigion and Flintshire whereby they have adopted the principle that embedding the LAPA in all relevant service plans will make it work more effectively. Everyone who is involved in physical activity should therefore have LAPA work included in relevant work plans and targets. Caerphilly CYPP and HSCWB strategies had clear reference to the LAPA as a local plan that contributed to both strategies.
42. We found a number of ways in which local authorities plan to implement the LAPA into key local authority strategies. As most local authorities were at the start of this process, it remains to be seen which will be most effective:
 - inviting representatives from each strategy area on the LAPA/sport and physical recreation working groups;
 - a mix of strategic advocates involved in the consultation to develop the strategies;
 - evoking shared priorities;
 - integrating LAPA into departmental business plans and performance management systems;
 - establishing a process to integrate LAPA into strategies; and
 - LAPA group reporting to an equivalent Chief Officers Management Board (COMB).

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43. Some local authorities have been constrained by timing differences. For example, local authorities concluded and finalised CYPP consultation exercises before the introduction of the LAPA. Others have not yet made the connection. For example, in both Cardiff and Gwynedd, LAPAs are not perceived to be pivotal to the achievement of HSCWB strategies and CYYP goals since they both consider the size of the funding streams to be negligible. We found an array of different circumstances in place in the local authorities we consulted, and a risk that this may well be the situation among the remaining 14 we did not visit.
44. There is also a risk that local authorities only ‘pay lip-service’ to ensuring that links between the LAPA and key strategies will actually be developed rather than just aspiring to it. Sport Wales should examine whether the LAPA planning timetable should be changed to better fit with the complex local authority strategic planning framework. Furthermore the Assembly Government should explore whether increasingly coterminous strategic planning frameworks would facilitate increased integration and networking between key strategies and ultimately increase the likelihood for more effective joint working.

A variety of different structures exists in local authorities, which presents challenges in embedding the LAPA

Changes in structure within local authorities have presented challenges in maintaining links within the LAPA

45. As the LAPA approach is still in its infancy, with 12 local authorities still in year one and 10 in year two⁵, it is still too early in the process to make a fair and reasoned judgement on which arrangements are the most appropriate and effective. However, local authorities must structure the delivery of the LAPA within the local context and in accordance with local needs and conditions.
46. Our analysis of LAPAs found that while there is a great deal of intention and aspiration in regard to setting up arrangements, more evidence is now needed to show that these arrangements are in place and starting to have an impact on developing effective partnerships. There were instances where groups identified in the LAPA structures had not actually met, or if they had, it was only to determine terms of reference.
47. In developing the LAPA, putting the right governance framework in place is vital within a complex delivery mechanism involving numerous parties, as identified in the Wales Audit Office’s 2007 report. Local authorities need to define roles, responsibilities and accountabilities to avoid confusion, gaps in provision and potential duplication. At the time of the review Flintshire was redrafting roles and responsibilities for representatives at the Sport Flintshire/LAPA management forum to provide clarity and reinforce accountabilities for all representatives.

⁵ A two-phase implementation was undertaken for the LAPA process with 10 local authorities forming the first phase: Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Conwy, Flintshire, Neath Port Talbot, Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Swansea and Wrexham.

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48. The LAPA approach has increased the visibility of leisure as a non-statutory service within the political elevations of local authorities, either where senior politicians have a personal interest or where senior officers have used their regular interface with members to actively promote the benefits of the LAPA and how it contributes to the achievement of objectives within key strategies.
 49. Political representation at the LAPA fora in local authorities is inconsistent. Sport Wales should consider expanding the terms of reference of its internal scrutiny process whereby its panels could invite, for example, cabinet members to contribute to the panel as a checking mechanism whilst their attendance would increase their understanding of the approach and raise the profile of the LAPA among local senior politicians.
 50. This visibility has been impeded elsewhere when structures have not been sufficiently clear for LAPA groups to know exactly where, when and what information to report. This lack of clarity has allowed a lack of accountability to materialise. Local authorities should construct structures to enable timely communication from LAPA forums to relevant political forums such as both HSCWB and CYP portfolios to illustrate its achievements and impact on young people and communities as a whole.
 51. Local authorities recognise this and feel that the strategic influence could be used more effectively at a local level to assist in improved joint working. There is significant risk that in determining arrangements and reporting lines, local authorities overcomplicate matters and cause confusion whereby officers are uncertain where they should report and how they link with others. This in turn creates confusion amongst partner organisations. Where there have been major organisational changes in structure, the loss of continuity has caused difficulties. Focus groups of staff were confused and generally unclear where they sat in the structure and communication was deemed ineffective. Swansea has since reappraised its Climbing Higher strategic and operational structures to streamline reporting lines and reduce bureaucracy.
 52. Local authorities have made more progress where they have sought to work within existing arrangements, as it allows for better continuity and less disruption. In Neath Port Talbot, the use of existing structures and frameworks has been used to good effect to improve the culture of LAPA delivery. The local authority and National Public Health Service recognises the Sport and Physical Activity Strategic Action group as a successful partnership where, as a collective, they are achieving tangible improvements within local communities.
 53. We found that local authorities are developing sport and physical activity structures with aspirations for multi-agency agreement for coterminous boundaries. Arrangements are beginning to work well in Caerphilly and there are plans in Blaenau Gwent (Case Study 5) that indicate such an appetite for multi-agency collaboration to extend the breadth of LAPA initiatives and increase opportunities for communities to participate at a local level.

Case Study 5 – multi agency collaboration in Blaenau Gwent is intended to extend the breadth of LAPA initiatives and increase opportunities for communities to participate

At the time of the review, Blaenau Gwent was in its first year of adopting the LAPA for 2009-10 and its initial intention was to create Sport and Physical Activity Networks (SPANs) to coalesce all sport and physical activities within the health promotion agenda.

The planned SPANs will be embedded into the Well-being Alliance Locality Groups to avoid duplication of effort and encourage more efficient use of budgets. The Council is continuing to engage with its partners from a number of local public agencies, with the aim of delivering against the Health, Social Care and Well-being priorities and ensuring that the LAPA profile is closely aligned to this process.

These groups will constitute three hubs along clusters of facilities in the three valleys to encourage schools to work with their communities, build capacity, maximise access to community buildings/green space and to provide a source of intelligence. The Locality groups will thereby endeavour to address the needs identified by local people and to improve the co-ordination of existing resources and the development of new projects to meet this need.

They hold a vision that the work of analysts in the NHS, local data from Communities First, Leisure Services, schools and police locality community profiling data will combine to form robust local information to inform targeted provision of activities. It is hoped that all agencies will see the advantages of coterminous provision of service for the communities.

Whilst this process is still in its infancy, it is clear that this will be a strong platform to provide more effective collaboration and the development of joint-funded projects. It is also being used as an engagement route for future LAPA planning.

The status afforded to the LAPA varies due to the perception of relatively small budgets and the levels of bureaucracy involved

54. Local authorities told us that the level of LAPA funding that is available is not acting as a lever at a strategic level. Local authorities are complacent about the continuation of Sport Wales funding as they have become used to the level of grant funding received and assume its continuation in setting core budgets.
55. Some local authorities see non-core programme funding as very small amounts of money that do not go far enough in encouraging innovation for finding local solutions to local problems. However, local authorities need to see all physical activity funding as a package rather than the perception of it being limited additional funding, and be accountable for its use and the impact that it has.
56. There are concerns from local authorities about the sustainability of funding as they have become heavily reliant on Sport Wales grants. Some local authorities are not willing to risk long-term planning or encourage innovation as there are concerns that funding will not be available, especially in the current economic climate.

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57. However, despite uncertainty about the availability of relatively small amounts of non-core funding and the likelihood for it to decline in future years, there are examples where local authorities, because of the LAPA, have sought to use funding in more sustainable ways. Examples of good practice include:
- budgets for Communities First and LAPA initiatives being pooled (Caerphilly County Borough Council);
 - nominal charges for activities introduced to guard against their being undervalued and to soften the blow of the pathway to clubs where fees will be unavoidable (Neath Port Talbot);
 - joint programming of activities between schools and leisure centres and evidence of reduced prices to increase participation (Flintshire County Council); and
 - co-location of services such as the Youth Service, 5 x 60 officer and Sports Development officers based in leisure centres, with plans to expand. (Caerphilly County Borough Council).

The LAPA process has provided a way to better organise Sport Wales funding, identify opportunities for innovation and provide clarity over working relationships

58. The quality of the information in the LAPAs relating to grant funding is presented inconsistently. This meant that we could not accurately determine the extent of core and non-core funding.
59. For example, the Sport and Physical Activity Delivery Plan prepared by Blaenau Gwent includes an amalgamation of all activities that contribute towards *Climbing Higher* objectives aligned with Sport Wales' six key themes and the contributions from different services/agencies. This was then usefully colour coded to reflect the source of funding. At the end of the plan, the funding is conveniently summarised in a table depicting the core and non-core funding requested and received per Sport Wales theme. Local authorities could further enhance this to include local authority funded initiatives where applicable and this would lend itself as a valuable source of data.
60. One of the aims of the LAPA was to reduce bureaucracy by introducing one process for applying for Sport Wales core funding, plus the additional non-core funding. However, some local authorities said that they found the process over-burdensome for what they perceive as a relatively small amount of money, especially in comparison, for example, with lottery grants. This perception arises out of the complacency about Sport Wales core funding referred to earlier.
61. Sport Wales is very clear that the LAPA approach does not need to be bureaucratic and that some local authorities may have overcomplicated it. However, we found that Sport Wales has an appetite for changing and improving the current process and is keen to introduce new ways of applying for funding.
62. Introducing a different application process may compel local authorities to think more carefully about core programmes in particular how they fit in with other local authority services and programmes and encourage innovation. Even though there are constraints around how Sport Wales core funding can be spent, local

authorities need to understand that the LAPA provides them with more flexibility within these programmes than was previously the case.

63. Ideally, Sport Wales envisages LAPAs being integrated into routine business planning for relevant departments, rather than making it a separate process. Not only would this reduce bureaucracy by incorporating it into existing processes, but would also help to embed the approach in the local authority such as in Flintshire and Ceredigion. Local authorities also need to see the LAPA as integrated into ways of working, rather than just an administrative funding process.
64. However, Sport Wales will have to accept a trade off between the quality of the LAPA and the extent of integration into existing standardised business planning/performance management arrangements which will vary considerably by authority. The LAPA is developing in some authorities acting as an umbrella for all physical activity spectrum initiatives and will have the capacity to inform Sport Wales of all core, non-core and locally funded initiatives across the LAPA/Climbing Higher delivery network as opposed to specific plans which will relate to a service portfolio.
65. Although the LAPA has provided a way to better organise existing funding, a more fundamental review of funding is necessary given the extent of the physical activity challenge. Consideration may be given to examining where in Wales the priorities lie for the investment of Sport Wales funding. Pooling all the core and non-core funding and then allocating it based on local need may be an alternative way forward. This could reduce the current complacency and make local authorities more accountable for physical activity funding.
66. It would follow that should Sport Wales adopt an increasingly flexible approach to allocating its grant funding there may be an implication for how Sport Wales manages that funding. In order to address this Sport Wales should develop a workforce strategy to manage the funding in this way and to ensure it has the capacity and capability to measure the impact of the flexible regime. Sport Wales should then be able to ensure, as far as possible, that funding is consistently directed to its desired target groups.

Although local authorities are providing LAPA monitoring reports, the quality is variable and is generally not supported by robust performance management

The quality of reporting is variable and there is limited sharing of good practice

67. Sport Wales has implemented an adequate monitoring regime for LAPAs through a system of quarterly, six monthly and annual reports, a spreadsheet to record performance data and scrutiny of the LAPAs by the Board. Scrutiny of LAPAs by the Board should provide assurance to both local authorities and Sport Wales that the quality of the content of the LAPAs is adequate. However, the effectiveness of this scrutiny is questionable given the obvious variance in quality of the LAPAs that we found.

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68. We found that there is a large variance in the quality of monitoring reports across the local authorities with the majority heavily concentrated on quantitative measures rather than quality of provision. In part, this reflects the feeling from local authorities that the frequency of monitoring reports required by Sport Wales is disproportionate to the amount of funding attached to LAPAs.
69. We found that at the beginning of the process, some local authorities found the support provided by Sport Wales officers was inadequate for the following reasons:
- some Sport Wales officers failed to understand the complexities of local authorities;
 - unreasonable expectations were placed on local authorities for changing the strategic and operational structures required to implement the LAPA;
 - there was a lack of sharing good practice from other local authorities; and
 - a lack of guidance from Sport Wales on their long-term strategic direction.
70. However, over time and as Sport Wales officers became aware of these constraints, the advice and support considerably improved. Local authorities told us that Sport Wales officers had come a long way in appreciating complexity of local authority financial constraints, structures, cultures and performance measurement techniques.
71. Evidence from monitoring reports indicates that local authorities are all at a different stage in the development of the LAPA in terms of robust reporting and evaluating performance. This makes it difficult to compare and draw out good practice because the quality is so variable. Sport Wales should consider how it can overcome this variation to collate an overall and perhaps regional overview of performance. This might usefully highlight specific initiatives that are deemed to be a success, signpost opportunities to share good practice and market success.
72. There has been no provision made within the LAPA arrangements for local authorities to share ideas amongst themselves. This could be part of the monitoring and evaluation process, facilitated by Sport Wales in its role as a development agency rather than merely a grant provider. In evaluating the success or otherwise of grant funded schemes the role of 'critical friend' is also appropriate in supporting and spreading good practice.
73. Sport Wales officers were generally comfortable with the time needed to administer the monitoring regime, although there is a risk that with the frequency of required reporting, it could become disproportionate.

Performance is being measured rather than managed and frameworks do not support effective monitoring and evaluation

74. At present, local authority LAPAs performance management is focussed heavily on outputs, rather than outcomes. It is also underpinned by short-term rather than long-term targets that are based on quantity criteria, rather than improving the quality of provision. The Assembly Government is particularly concerned that LAPA performance measurement is very programme specific and little effort has been made to align key performance indicators with *Climbing Higher* targets.

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75. There are also overall weaknesses in the LAPA approach regarding the relationship between performance and the granting of funds. Sport Wales does not have a sense of what impact the funding is having on physical activity levels and whether the funding could have greater impact by being diverted elsewhere. There is potential for more rewarding of innovation with regard to successes in achieving, for example, real engagement with the third sector rather than simply being a numbers game and conversely challenge local authorities which are deemed to be underperforming.

There are different interpretations of the principles of the LAPA which have given rise to delivery plans of varying quality

76. We found that the quality of delivery plans varies significantly across local authorities. Although the variety of different approaches and content is welcomed as it supports the idea of local solutions to local problems, the level of inconsistency in quality and depth of information suggests that not all local authorities appear to know what Sport Wales's expectations are. Some local authorities appear to view the LAPA prospectus as guidance whilst others view it more as a specification of 'must-haves'.
77. It was also apparent that a number of LAPAs only set out the very basics of what non-core funded projects are seeking to do and achieve with very little information on the supporting governance frameworks and reporting arrangements.
78. In order for Sport Wales to better understand delivery and performance across Wales, LAPA plans need to contain an agreed minimum level of information.

Action Plan

Para	Recommendation	Priority	Responsibility	Agreed	Comment
22-25	1 Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the leading strategic agencies in the direction and provision of support for the Climbing Higher Strategy, including the management of LAPAs.		Assembly Government Sport Wales CMO		
47	2 Local authorities should clearly define roles, responsibilities and accountabilities in the delivery of the LAPA plans to avoid confusion, gaps in provision and potential duplication within a complex delivery mechanism involving numerous parties.		LAs		
51	3 Local authorities should put in place appropriate structures to enable timely communication from LAPA forums to relevant political fora such as both HSCWB and CYP portfolios to illustrate its achievements and impact.		LAs		

Para	Recommendation	Priority	Responsibility	Agreed	Comment
49 67 68 74 75	<p>4 Sport Wales and local authorities should ensure the LAPA approach is underpinned by an effective performance management framework that is focussed on outcome and quality measures and will allow for meaningful benchmarking. We recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust scrutiny arrangements are put in place. • Performance of local authorities is linked to the LAPA funding through criteria such as quality, outcome and innovation, as well as output. • Sport Wales and local authorities should intervene where performance falls below expected standards. In particular, Sport Wales should provide more challenge to local authorities which are deemed to be under-performing. • Sport Wales annually review its monitoring regime to ensure that the burden on local authorities and its own officers is not disproportionate to the levels of LAPA funding. 		Sport Wales LAs		

Para	Recommendation	Priority	Responsibility	Agreed	Comment
71	5 Sport Wales should address the variation in LAPA quality by developing, in consultation with CORL, a minimum standard template for the LAPA.		Sport Wales LAs CORL		
65	6 Sport Wales and the Assembly Government should undertake a fundamental review of local authority funding, both core and non-core, to establish where and how funding could be best directed to have the most impact on physical activity levels across Wales.		Sport Wales Assembly Government		
66	7 Sport Wales should develop a workforce strategy to ensure it has the capacity and capability to manage the funding in a more flexible way and to measure the impact of the flexible funding regime, to ensure, as far as possible, that funding is consistently being directed to its desired target groups.		Sport Wales		
43	8 Local authorities should better integrate the LAPA into their key strategic planning framework which includes the Children's and Young People's Plan, the Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategy and the Local Development Plan. This should then provide for better integration into the Community Plan.		LAs		
65	9 Local authorities should integrate the LAPA into routine business planning for relevant departments, rather than making it a separate process, thereby reducing bureaucracy and helping to embed approaches to increasing physical activity.		LAs		

Para	Recommendation	Priority	Responsibility	Agreed	Comment
71	<p>10 Sport Wales and CORL should improve the ways in which they facilitate the sharing of good practice in areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of plans and documents; • delivery structures; • initiatives and projects; • integrating the LAPA into the local authorities' core strategic and operational planning; • targeting priority groups; • cross cutting, joint working and multi-agency collaboration; and • monitoring, evaluation and reporting. 	Sport Wales			
35	<p>11 Sport Wales should explore how it could use its influential position over national governing bodies in Wales to broker better joint working between NGBs and local authorities.</p>	Sport Wales			
49	<p>13 Sport Wales and local authorities should consider collaborating on scrutiny processes, for example by inviting Cabinet members onto Sport Wales panels, and/or inviting Sport Wales representatives to scrutiny committees.</p>	Sport Wales LA's			
44	<p>14 Sport Wales should examine whether the LAPA planning timetable should be changed to better fit with the complex local authority strategic planning framework.</p>	Sport Wales			

Para	Recommendation	Priority	Responsibility	Agreed	Comment
44	15 The Assembly Government should explore whether increasingly coterminous strategic planning frameworks would facilitate increased integration and networking between key strategies and ultimately increase the likelihood for more effective joint working.	Assembly Government			

<p>● ● ● High ● ● Medium ● Low</p>
<p>Date 00.00.0000 Target completion date 00.00.0000 Actual completion date</p>



Wales Audit Office
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9LJ
Tel: 029 2032 0500
Fax: 029 2032 0600
Textphone: 029 2032 0660
E-mail: info@wao.gov.uk
Website: www.wao.gov.uk