

Annex A: Obesity crisis: councils' concerns about obese teenagers as sports participation figures plunge

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Britain's couch-potato culture is creating a "lost generation" of obese and physically inactive teenagers, as shock new figures show grassroots sports participation is plunging, councils warn.

Latest figures show the number of people aged 16 and above taking part in sport at least once a week has slumped by 400,000 – equivalent to a city the size of Bristol – since the 2012 Olympics, from 15,890,400 people in 2011-12 to 15,491,200 in 2014-15.

Meanwhile, new figures show the extent of the obesity crisis which is gripping the nation. More than 135 people with diabetes have a leg, foot or toe amputated each week and four out of five of these amputations are preventable. It is estimated that obesity costs the NHS £4.2 billion a year and physical inactivity about £1.1 billion.

Nearly half a billion pounds is awarded by Sport England, the governing body, to national sports bodies to increase participation. Out of the 46 sports only six (athletics, cycling, netball, table tennis, archery and fencing) have so far shown a significant rise in participation rates.

The Local Government Association (LGA), which represents more than 370 councils, says it is imperative national funding is devolved through Sport England to councils and local partners in a bid to boost active lifestyles and in turn reduce obesity and ease pressure on the NHS.

In a new submission to the Government, which is drawing up a new sports strategy, the LGA is calling for councils to be given greater control of how the funding is used. Currently, it is fragmented across various government departments and agencies.

The LGA is calling on the Government and Sport England to rebalance future funding away from national sports bodies and directly into grassroots sports programmes.

Cllr Ian Stephens, Chairman of the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board said:

"We are in the midst of a full-blown obesity crisis which is being exacerbated by plunging levels of grassroots sports participation. This is creating a lost generation of obese kids and putting the NHS under enormous pressure.

"Councils are best-placed to reach those who play sport or want to start doing so, as most sport takes place in swimming pools, leisure centres, parks and open spaces owned or managed by local authorities. However, they are being hamstrung by a national funding system which is not fit for purpose.

"Local government has seen its funding reduced by 40 per cent since 2010, including a recent £200 million cut to the in-year public health budget, while trying to protect vital services like caring for the elderly, fixing the roads and maintaining bin collections.

"Councils need the opportunity to spend this sports funding in the most effective way – on the parks, playing fields and facilities where it can best reach the most people to get active and feel healthier.

"Local authorities already have a great track record in areas where they have teamed up with certain sports to boost participation, such as in cycling and tennis and this should be available to all local authorities to expand upon. The Premier League's recent announcement of investment in school sport is helpful but funding is also needed for the other, less wealthy sports so that as many people as possible can benefit."

Sports participation has already been given a great boost thanks to the work of local authorities. Cycling has seen an increase of more than 100,000 extra people riding bikes at least once a week compared to 2012, bringing the total number of regular adult cyclists to two million. British Cycling credits partnerships with councils as one of the reasons for their success, in particular council support for recreational programmes such as "Sky Ride Local", which are free, local rides led by a trained cyclist.

Tennis has also experienced a resurgence in Sport England's latest Active People Survey, after an initial decrease in participation following the 2012 Olympic Games. The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) has developed a new approach to working with

councils, including using council-owned tennis courts and offering affordable opportunities to play tennis through initiatives informally with access to coaching support, such as "Tennis Tuesdays" and "Tennis in the Park."

Notes to editors:

According to Diabetes UK, **more than 135 people with diabetes have a leg, foot or toe amputated each week** and four out of five of these amputations are preventable.

Obesity is believed to account for 80-85% of the risk of developing type **2 diabetes**

Physical inactivity is estimated to cost the NHS £1.1 billion.

Obesity is estimated to cost the NHS £4.2 billion a year

LGA's response to the Government's consultation on a New Strategy for Sport

In 2005/06 during the period when London won the bid to stage the Olympic games, the number of those aged 16 and above playing sport at least once a week was 34.6% of the population, according to **Sport England figures**. This peaked in 2011-12 at 36.2% during the Games but has been falling every year since, with the latest statistics for 2014/15 published in June 2015 showing 35.5% are now playing sport weekly.

The 2015/16 public health allocation for councils was reduced by £200 million in the middle of this year, which if made permanent in the Spending Review will place additional pressures on council budgets and services.

LGA's Spending Review submission

Between 2013 and 2017, Sport England will invest almost £500 million into 46 National Governing Body (NGB) Whole Sport Plans that aim to increase participation. A new 'payment by results' model was introduced in 2013 to clawback funding from NGBs who failed to meet their participation targets. Out of the 46 NGBs, only six (athletics, cycling, netball, table tennis, archery and fencing) have so far shown a significant increase in participation rates.

The remaining funding is split between facilities and local investment, such as **County Sports Partnerships**, coaching and volunteering.