

Children in Scotland

Princes House
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Health and Sport Committee
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EH99 1SP

Pathways into Sport Inquiry

Children in Scotland fully supports improvement in sports education and in the development of a more effective infrastructure. While we are not commenting on the more specialised aspects of this call for evidence, we would wish to submit the following points for consideration.

1. While the provision of specialised facilities and coaching is a vital component of sporting participation, encouragement and support of physical activity more generally can play a critical role in introducing children and young people to more organised sporting pursuits. Robust support for a nationwide play agenda (including within the forthcoming Early Years Framework) would be a prime pathway into sport.
2. Optimising sporting excellence across a wide range of activities is a valuable objective in many ways. It should not, however, detract from the value of participation per se in improving fitness, well-being and self-esteem.
3. Safe access to physical activity for children from an early age can provide a solid foundation for involvement in more structured sport. Increasingly, pre-school facilities are introducing outdoor play and activity as a routine element of the curriculum. Nature kindergartens and other efforts to promote 'nurture through nature' represent an excellent pathway into sport later in children's lives. This should be encouraged and supported both through Early Years policies and policies promoting access to sport.

4. The built environment should promote opportunities for safe physical activity. Examples of this would include facilities for self-organised ball games that do not adversely impact on others in the community, extending cycle paths, and provision of accessible playgrounds.
5. Safety advice about physical activity and sport and ensuring that children can judge and take risk appropriately should be an integral part of the educational curriculum at all ages and stages. Children in Scotland promotes greater safety and greater physical activity as compatible goals.
6. The call for evidence makes specific reference to success in both the Olympics and the Paralympics. All of our preceding comments would apply equally to children with additional support needs and any plan for facilities development should be designed to be as inclusive as possible.

Yours sincerely,

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