

APPG on Further Education & Lifelong Learning

AGM and Impact of College Sport on health and wellbeing

Meeting Minutes: Monday 6 June 2022, 4.00-5.00pm,

Committee Room 15, House of Commons



Time	Item
4.00 – 4.05	Introductions & opening remarks from the Chair, Peter Aldous MP
4.05 – 4.10	Speaker 1 – Michaela Lines, Director of Study Programmes, Lincoln College
4.10 – 4.15	Speaker 2 – Gemma Bell, Student, Lincoln College
4.15 – 4.20	AGM
4.20 – 4.25	Speaker 3 – Mark Lawrie, CEO, StreetGames
4.25 – 4.30	Speaker 4 – Karen Dobson OBE, Principal and Chief Executive, Newcastle & Stafford Colleges Group
4.30 – 4.55	Q&A with Parliamentarians, speakers and observers
4.55 – 5.00	Closing remarks from Chair

Introduction & Opening Remarks

Peter Aldous MP opened the meeting and introduced the speakers. He set the scene for the meeting and outlined some of the benefits of sport and physical activity including reduced inequalities and the risk of developing a range of medical conditions, including diabetes, cancer, dementia, strokes, heart disease and depression. He also noted that some of the feedback he is getting post-covid, is that overcoming loneliness and exclusion is a real challenge and that sport and physical activity can help increase overall confidence and develop a strong sense of community. He said college sport has a key role to play in this.

Speaker 1 – Michaela Lines

The first speaker Michaela Lines, Director of Study Programmes at Lincoln College, focussed on Project You, a program the college runs in collaboration with Chesterfield College. It focusses on physical activity, which was not just about physical movement, but included sessions on wellbeing, understanding food, weight, and calories etc, in addition to promoting team building and confidence building. They noticed that students were coming out of lockdown and lacking the skills to make friends and be around each other.

Michaela said that the college saw the benefits of those people engaging in these activities, which included improved English and maths engagement and improved retention rates. Part of the program was helping students to self-reflect and increase employability skills. In terms of engagement, there were over 600 students engaged in the physical activities offered and that it worked best when it was embedded into their timetables.

Michaela highlighted that students would come in for English and maths if they knew there was a sport activity later in the day. She said that more funding was needed to make it a natural part of the student journey and not just an add on.

Speaker 2 Gemma Bell

Gemma introduced herself as a third-year degree student at Lincoln College and a coordinator for the Project You program. She spoke about her background, and said that as a single mother to two children she didn't appreciate her body and didn't feel like she fit into the sport world anymore, prior to becoming involved in college sport.

She spoke not only about her student experience but how by taking part in Project You she was able to pass that on to FE students. She said that while her background was football, she said that offering students to participate in many sports was a positive step. Gemma noted that many students taking part in the project did not see sports as something for them, but they were able to overcome that. Through the project she organised sports such as blind hockey/wheelchair basketball where the fear of not being the best in the room was accepted, and this gave students confidence.

Gemma also noted that a key difference in the program is how they engage with students as many come to college fearing physical activity due to poor PE experiences in school. They reinforce that the program is recreational, and she said she felt that providing opportunities for people to participate in sports where they don't feel like they have to win is important for those engaging with sports and physical activity after bad experiences.

Gemma also gave example of students' success. This included the college airspace students taking part in activities every week. These students - who are on content heavy courses - enjoy the weekly break doing "absolutely" crazy sport which has helped them cope with their studies. Finally, she noted that the project has been about training competent students and caring students that go out and volunteer at grassroots clubs, and who achieve more because they're happier.

The Chair thanked Gemma for her contribution and then announced they would hold the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Annual General Meeting

The AGM was held and Peter noted that all existing officers of the group were happy to remain in position. Peter stated that he was happy to be re-elected as Chair and this was agreed.

The Chair confirmed the Vice Chairs of the group were Baroness Garden of Frognal and Stephen Farry MP, which was agreed.

The Chair confirmed the Officers of the group as Lord Blunkett and Emma Hardy MP, which was agreed. The Chair asked if any of the parliamentarians present would like to become an officer of the group and Lord Addington added that he would like to be an Officer of the group, and this was agreed.

Peter stated that he will work with the group's secretariat, the Association of Colleges, to set the agenda for the upcoming year with the next session focussing on FE and HE collaboration.

Speaker 3 Mark Lawrie

The third speaker was Mark Lawrie, CEO of StreetGames, a sports charity who only work in low-income areas with organisations that are connected in their communities, including youth groups, housing associations and colleges. He said that StreetGames provide wrap around support to these organisations such as support in bid writing, and that their vision is for sport to help build healthier, safer and more successful communities. StreetGames also try and persuade larger organisations such as the FA and Sports England to change the way they offer sport in their communities as club sport can sometimes be exclusionary to those in low-income areas.

Mark stated that bringing sport, physical activity and health together was important. He said that StreetGames have been writing the guidance for youth social prescribing and that they have worked with eight Greater Manchester Colleges to embed social prescribing into what they do.

Speaker 4 Karen Dobson, OBE

The fourth and final speaker was Karen Dobson OBE, who is Principal and CEO at Newcastle and Stafford College Group. She began by highlighting that sport is a passion of hers and also mentioned the importance of events such as the AoC Sport National Championships which.

Karen noted that their college facilities are used by local organisations and schools, and the college's sport academy holds pre-season sessions during the summer period to help the transition from school to college. The college also recognises the benefits of sports and physical activity with young people in developing positive character traits and increasing college attendance and retention, with the Academy of Sport in year retention being 98.9%.

Summarising, Karen said that she is sad by the lack of secondary sport and that they are already losing students to sports and physical activity before they reach FE. She said that broad cross college sport provides positive lifelong activity habits and memorable experiences. However, in her view the FE sports offer is far too variable between college the financial resources a college can commit are very different and it shouldn't be down to a principal having an interest in sport for it to be part of the agenda.

Q&A Summary

Panellists and parliamentarians then had a discussion based around the points raised by speakers. Some of the key points discussed included:

- Pathways after post-16 sport and physical activity - Gemma Bell noted that their approach to people will impact their lifelong engagement. Mark Lawrie talked about the informal offer that can be done in communities, however these organisations live hand to mouth unlike more formal clubs. He said that young people do form self-regulating groups for physical activity and it is about helping young people make that connection to physical activity.
- Institutions placing academic attainment as the priority and differing attitudes across FE to sport - Michaela Lines said that part of this is related to the motivation/interest of the principal, and that it also depends on attainment, as it's easier to do the 'fun stuff' if attainment is up. Additionally, it does take a team culture in an organisation to drive it forward. Unfortunately, as AoC President Sally Dicketts CBE noted, "what gets measured gets done" and while she doesn't believe a leader of a GFE college would think sport doesn't matter, if you haven't seen the

benefit of it you might not see the point of it. Karen agreed and added that sport is one of the things that have been squeezed in the last 15 years and that leaders do sometimes have to pick and choose.

- Funding - all speakers agreed this was part of the issue, with AoC Sport Policy Manager, Matt Rhodes highlighting the funding from Sports England that placed Development Officers in approximately 215 colleges and made a huge difference has been cut. Since those Development Officers left, activity dropped 3-4%, with FE activity levels being the lowest across education and the worst funded.

Closing Remarks from the Chair

The Chair thanked all of the speakers for their contributions and Parliamentarians for their questions during today's meeting. He said that the group would write to Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston, who unfortunately could not attend the meeting due to parliamentary business, to highlight the issues that were discussed during the session. Parliamentarians present also confirmed their willingness to submit parliamentary questions on these topics.

Meeting closed 4:57pm