

Health and Sport Committee

Note of a visit to Aberdeen Sports Village on Monday 24 September 2012.

Members present: Bob Doris (Deputy Convener) and Nanette Milne

Aberdeen Sports Village staff and others:

Jan Griffiths, Sports Development Officer, Aberdeen Sports Village;

David Beattie, Chief Executive, Aberdeen Sports Village;

Andrinne Craig, Scottish Disability Sport / Active Communities Development Officer

Ally Love, Regional Development Manager, Scottish Athletics

Joyce Hogg, Athletics Coach, Aberdeen Amateur Athletics Club & Aberdeen Sports Village

Donald Pirie, Sport & Exercise Team, University of Aberdeen

John Duguid, StreetSport

Cameron Craddock, StreetSport

Jackie Fleming, NHS Grampian

The key points discussed were:

- How Aberdeen Sports Village (ASV) strived to provide a balanced programme in terms of ages/groups/clubs etc., also seeking to ensure that the facilities were being used throughout the day.
- The steering group behind the ASV included the university, NHS and sports governing bodies and hence contacts with these partners were very good.
- It was explained that ASV was part of a Community Sports Hub as opposed to being a hub in itself.
- That a balance should be struck between elite and community sport.
- A shortage of athletics coaches was highlighted and, it was felt, poor fitness levels among school children.
- The work of Active Schools was praised but the need to back up, say, an 8-week programme of one sport with something beyond that was mentioned.
- A similar theme arose in the context of areas or “hot spots” being targeted for activities for young people but, once the level of anti-social behaviour dropped, the focus moved onto the next area.

- The benefits of a community approach were underlined in terms of seeking volunteers and leaders.
- Some of the hard-to-reach children and young people, it was pointed out, may be banned from mainstream sporting facilities.
- The case was made for incentivising young people and other volunteers through, for example, supporting them through coaching qualifications.
- Some barriers for young people becoming more physically active were difficult to get around – for example, lack of parental support, or their friends and peers not being interested in sport.
- In some cases, a shiny new facility (like the ASV) might be off putting to some people it was suggested.
- Health checks were one way of getting people in the door of such a venue, people who might not come along to a sporting venue otherwise.
- The importance of being as inclusive as possible in what was on offer was stressed.
- Schools made use a lot of use of the ASV for sports days in June and though the cost of the facility was not a barrier, the cost of transport was said to be.
- The idea of sport being fun over that of winning was considered to be a good message to encourage children and young people but also in seeking parental buy-in.
- A more positive culture of PE in schools needed to be reintroduced it was said.
- In terms of what works, the Keep Well initiative was said to be making a difference.
- ASV was gathering data on use of the facility by disabled people and groups.
- A concern was voiced that Community Sports Hubs might end up being based in “articulate” areas only. Tied to this was the issue of territorialism and how some people, young people in particular, might not travel to or through certain areas.
- A gap in one area of the city in the provision of football for 12-16 year olds was pointed out, leading to children going to play elsewhere or not playing at all.
- The point about incentivising volunteers was repeated, the idea, literally, of people taking the ball and running with it.