



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

HEALTH AND SPORT COMMITTEE

Tuesday 4 September 2012

Session 4

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HEALTH AND SPORT COMMITTEE

22nd Meeting 2012, Session 4

CONVENER

*Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)

*Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP)

*Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con)

*Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)

*Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

*Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab)

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Mary Allison (sportscotland)

Kim Atkinson (Scottish Sports Association)

Andrew Bain (Active Stirling and Sporta Scotland)

Oliver Barsby (Scottish Association of Local Sports Councils)

Lee Cousins (Scottish Sports Association)

Stewart Harris (sportscotland)

John Howie (NHS Health Scotland)

Ann Kerr (NHS Health Scotland)

Daryl McKenzie (Leisure and Culture Dundee)

Steven Percy (East Renfrewshire Council)

Willie Young (Argyll and Bute Council)

Stuart Younie (VOCAL)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Eugene Windsor

LOCATION

Committee Room 1

Scottish Parliament

Health and Sport Committee

Tuesday 4 September 2012

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 09:30*]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Duncan McNeil): Good morning and welcome to the 22nd meeting in 2012 of the Health and Sport Committee. As usual at this point, I remind everyone present to switch off mobile phones and BlackBerrys, as they can interfere with the sound system.

Agenda item 1 is a decision on taking in private item 3, which is consideration of the programme of evidence for our community sport inquiry. The issue has been discussed recently and I suggest that if there is no good reason to hold the item in private we hold it in public. Are members agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Community Sport Inquiry

09:30

The Convener: Agenda item 2 is the opening evidence session of our inquiry into support for community sport. I welcome to the meeting our first panel. From sportscotland we have Stewart Harris, chief executive and Mary Allison, head of strategic planning; from the Scottish Sports Association we have Lee Cousins, chairman, and Kim Atkinson, policy director; and from NHS Health Scotland we have Ann Kerr, head of healthy living, and John Howie, health improvement programme manager.

We will move quickly to our first question, which is from Gil Paterson.

Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): Good morning, everyone. In its submission, the Scottish Sports Association says that 150,000 people volunteer in sport in Scotland. I do not wish to challenge that figure in any way and will take it as read—I simply want to establish how you came to the figure and who exactly we are talking about. The figure is pretty consistent with a large number of the submissions that we have received, so I agree that we are talking about very high numbers.

However, my daughter is a member of a gymnastics club and just this week my wife has been chapping the doors of small and big businesses, looking for raffle prizes and trying to raise funds. She has also manned stalls but as far as I am aware she is not registered as a volunteer in any way. Would she be included in your 150,000 figure? If not, does that mean that there are even more hidden volunteers whom we do not know about supporting community sport?

Kim Atkinson (Scottish Sports Association): Asking whether we have captured everything is, as with any survey, a very fair challenge. My guess is that that figure is a fairly conservative estimate of the number of people who volunteer; I believe that a third of the adults and half of the young people who volunteer each year do so in sport. I think that that gives a sense of the scale but, as you suggest, I am sure that volunteers are missed out.

Another challenge is trying to define the term “volunteer”, particularly with regard to sport. If you ask many of those who are involved in what we might traditionally think of as volunteering in sport, most of them will probably say that they only help out. I bet that the mums or dads who wash the cricket or baton-twirling kit do not think that they are volunteering, but if they are actually washing the team’s kit they are being volunteers in the same way that the coach or referee on the pitch is

a volunteer. Given some of the challenges around defining the term “volunteer”, I would say that the 150,000 figure is actually a very conservative estimate. However, those people still form a significant part of not only our community but the volunteering community—indeed, as I have said, they form perhaps the largest part of that community.

Moreover, as I am sure that you will have read, a fifth of our population is a member of one of the 13,000 voluntary sports clubs—not private gyms, football supporters clubs or whatever—and the fact that the community is not just volunteering in sport but that sport itself is actually in our communities also emphasises the scale of all this.

Gil Paterson: Funnily enough, you highlight an issue that came up when I spoke to my wife. She did not recognise herself as a volunteer—she was just a mum. When she turns up to take my daughter to her club, she also does a wee bit to help. I thought that what you said would be the case.

That leads me on to—

The Convener: Can we hear some further responses before you move on?

Gil Paterson: That would be fine—I will be happy to hear them.

Mary Allison (sportscotland): I can provide some clarification on the figures. The Scottish household survey gathers data on volunteering. In total, about 30 per cent of adults in Scotland volunteer and 15 per cent of that number volunteer in sport. Volunteering in sport is one of the most popular forms of volunteering. That equates to about 4.5 per cent of the Scottish population volunteering in sport, which is consistent with the level of volunteering in sport in Wales, in Northern Ireland and in England. We have reason to be robust about that figure, because it is similar to the proportion who volunteer in other countries. Roughly speaking, that comes to a slightly bigger number—about 195,000 adults—than the one that you mentioned. That is our estimate from the Scottish household survey, which picks up a fairly robust sample that is used for measuring all sorts of other policy areas.

Gil Paterson: That leads me nicely on to my next question, if no one else would like to comment.

Do you have any information on how what we do in this regard compares with what other European countries do? Is the foundation of sport in Europe the same as it is in Scotland? To me, it seems that, if we took away the volunteers, sport would almost collapse. Is the model in Europe the same, or are things done differently there?

Mary Allison: We have some data on volunteering in Europe. Volunteering in sport is one of the themes that the European Union has been looking at. The highest level of volunteering is in Finland, where the figure is around 11 per cent, but the amount of public sector support for sport in Finland is extremely small. In Holland—the Netherlands—the proportion is around 10 per cent. In countries in which public sector provision is limited, voluntary sector provision tends to be higher. We are probably somewhere in the mid-range; we have a balance of public and private sector provision, and although we have a big voluntary sector, it is not as big as it is in some other European countries.

Stewart Harris (sportscotland): Structurally, we have a wee bit of catching up to do on community sport. Much of Europe has had an emphasis on sustainable communities and communities supporting their own sports clubs. There are some high-profile examples of big football clubs that have lots of sports clubs attached to them. That approach gets right down into the heart of communities. In many Scandinavian countries, there is per capita support for members of sports clubs. I guess that that is the focus of the committee’s inquiry.

We are ambitious; we are trying to give such opportunities to communities across Scotland. If we are to increase participation and opportunities in voluntarism and sport, we must continue down that path. I am sure that we will get into some of the detail of that as part of the committee’s conversation.

Lee Cousins (Scottish Sports Association): The structure of sports clubs here is slightly different from that in Europe, where they tend to be bigger by a factor of 10 or even 20. Whereas an average sports club in Scotland probably has about 60 members, in some European countries the figure could be 600 or even 6,000. The result is that sports clubs in Europe have the capability of hiring professionals as part of the governance of their organisation. Because we have smaller clubs that do not have the same income flow, with certain key posts and on certain key governance and facility management issues we tend to be much more reliant on volunteers. You would not see that on the continent.

If we want to move forward—I understand where Stewart Harris is coming from—we must find an alternative way of supporting the volunteers, because the present system is not self-supporting, by virtue of the clubs’ scale.

Gil Paterson: I will let other members come in; I am sure that we will wander into that area shortly.

The Convener: Yes. The area is important.

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): I keep hearing at the community level—not particularly in relation to sport, but in relation to scouting and guiding, for example—about the difficulty of getting and retaining volunteers. Is that an issue in the sporting world? If so, what do you see as the main barriers to people volunteering?

Lee Cousins: In answering that question, we must look at two types of volunteer. First, there are volunteers around the activity, such as coaches, officials and people who wash the strips. Anecdotally, it is no more difficult to find that type of volunteer than it has been in the past. Anecdotally again, most governing bodies with a good coaching structure will say that the number of coaches is improving and that they affiliate more people each year.

Finding volunteers who have more to do with governance issues, such as treasurers, chairmen, membership secretaries and child protection officers, is more difficult. It was probably ever thus, but I think that finding such volunteers is more difficult now. It is quite difficult.

If there is no growth in either type of volunteer, the club will get imbalanced and will not grow. Either a lack of coaches—as I say, I do not think that they are as difficult to find—or a lack of people who are willing to do the organisational part of the club's work will prevent the club from growing. Currently, our biggest difficulty is with the second type of volunteer.

The usual barrier is time—people need to have the available time at the right time—but our culture is part of the issue. When we seek volunteers, we need to ensure that the activity will be fun and enjoyable. After all, it will be the person's hobby. We cannot say, "Unless you become treasurer, your club will collapse." If I did that, I would simply give my stress to someone else. Saying "Come and join me in my stress" is not a way to invite someone to become a volunteer.

A lot of it is about how we ask the questions. Many people will say that they have not volunteered because they have never been asked to do so. It is a matter of how people ask the questions and how attractive they make the proposition. Getting volunteers is entirely possible if the role and its purpose are made clear and people are given the scale of the task.

Stewart Harris: I have a personal anecdote as well. I have volunteered as a basketball coach for 25 to 30 years. Time is a bit of a barrier, but I try to get over it.

I agree with everything that Lee Cousins said about time. Many little things get in people's way. However, there is also a leadership issue. One reason why I went back to my basketball club was to give some help to the coaches who were

already there, given the length of my experience. There was an opportunity to put back in a different way. I still coach a team on a weekly basis, but I also try to help to mentor and give people confidence. That is a really important thing about volunteering nowadays. It is about having confidence, being part of something and being given guidance and support down the way. That is a key issue, which sportscotland is very clear about, and I think that it will come up again when we talk about community sport clubs and hubs and the leadership factor.

Kim Atkinson: I agree with what has been said about leadership and confidence. They are certainly part of the issue.

As Lee Cousins said, time or the perception of time is an issue; it does not matter which we are talking about. If people perceive that time is a barrier, it is a barrier to them.

Lee Cousins spoke about people never having been asked to volunteer. That is quite often a barrier. Most people say that they have not volunteered because they have not been asked to do so within the structure that Lee Cousins talked about, in which people are told the time that is involved and what they will get out of it.

People do not necessarily know where to go to volunteer. We can do more to make information about that accessible to people. As Lee Cousins said, when we ask people to volunteer, there is very much a culture in which we say, "Please volunteer. We need you to help." Instead, we could look at volunteering slightly differently and say to people, "You will enjoy this"; we could talk about the kind of things that people might get out of volunteering, the experiences and the kind of people whom they might meet. We could say why we choose to volunteer in our personal time—because we enjoy it—and what we get out of it. Stewart Harris spoke about that. We could tell people that they might enjoy it as well, rather than saying, "We need somebody to help, please." To sell volunteering, we could use different phrases and language, which might appeal.

09:45

One of the opportunities around that involves—for want of a better phrase—employer-supported volunteering. People say that their two key barriers are a lack of knowledge of where to go to volunteer and a lack of time in which to volunteer, so there is an opportunity to look slightly differently at the culture of volunteering and ask how we can overcome those barriers.

We need to think about how we engage employers and get them to consider issues such as flexible working hours. For example, people with a volunteering commitment for the local

Highland dancing club at 3 o'clock one afternoon might find themselves time-short. However, if someone has the skill to be a secretary or a coach for such a club, we need to think about how we can match them to that opportunity through measures such as employers providing credited working hours, flexible volunteering and so on. We need them to say, "As part of our corporate social responsibility, we will give you that two hours on a Wednesday afternoon to go and help at the club."

That needs to be supported by a system or a database in the place of work that notes that Joe Bloggs is interested in taking up a volunteering opportunity. There are databases that contain information about volunteering opportunities, but we need to do more to get the club information into them to ensure that they are comprehensive. We also need to get the message to the wider public that, if they want to volunteer, there is something for them and we need to show them how they can get involved.

There are a couple of opportunities to overcome those two key barriers.

Mary Allison: There are some reasons for us to be optimistic regarding sport. The attraction of sport, compared to some other areas of volunteering, appears to be evident. The area faces the same challenges as others, but not necessarily of the same scale. The being young in Scotland survey showed that 46 per cent of 11 to 16-year-olds wanted to volunteer in sport and recreation. It is a popular activity for young people, particularly young people who want to build skills, expand their curriculum vitae and gain some credible work experience.

Sport has a huge amount to gain from those young people's skills. They are far more successful in terms of their social networking skills and reaching into their own community than many traditional volunteers are. Critically, however, as Stewart Harris said, there needs to be leadership, focus and an element of mentoring.

The Convener: It will be easier to get volunteers in certain communities, and those are not necessarily the communities that need the volunteers. What is being done by the various organisations that believe that volunteers are vitally important to ensuring that we derive more benefits from sport to ensure that recruitment strategies are in place for the on-going recruitment of volunteers?

The submissions that we have received tell us that, for example, Manchester volunteer sport bureau recruited 2,000 volunteers and we hear lots of positive talk about the volunteering around the Olympics and the potential for volunteering around the Commonwealth games. Is there any evidence that someone who volunteers to

participate in the Olympics goes back to their community and volunteers to run or support a sports club or whatever?

There are definitely significant issues to be discussed. I am particularly interested in how we meet the needs of volunteers in communities where the capacity to be the treasurer, chairman or whatever is simply not there and, as a consequence, there is less voluntary activity.

What are you all doing to ensure that we have the banks of volunteers that we need? They come and go, do they not? You need to recruit. As members of political parties, we know how difficult it is to get volunteers.

Stewart Harris: The issue of the Olympics and the Paralympics is interesting. Once the games are finished, the databases of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games will be made available and we will be able to extract the sections that are to do with Scotland and maybe even the north of England. As Lee Cousins said, we need to contact those people and ask them to volunteer.

We cannot do that from a national perspective. I have previously spoken to you and others around the table about our relationship with all 32 local authorities and the work that we are doing collectively in that regard.

As Kim Atkinson said, the club and community structure involves 13,000 small clubs. One of the things that we are trying to do through community sport hubs is to look at that scale. We have already identified 141 community sport hubs, although they are not operational yet. The principle of the hubs is that a number of sports will work together. There is leadership, a home—that could be a school; I will return to that issue—and an opportunity for a number of sports to work together and support each other to grow, if that is what they are looking for, or just to be sustained, if that is their priority.

With regard to our work with the SSA, Kim Atkinson and Lee Cousins work with all the governing bodies, as do we, and there is a job for us all in bringing together those sports in local communities, regardless of where they are. There is huge potential for using schools throughout Scotland, and secondary schools in particular. If I was to be really greedy—I have already been quoted on this—every single secondary school in Scotland would be a hub of some sort, not just for sport but for other community activities. At present, we have about 70-odd secondary schools acting as hubs.

The Convener: What is being done? All the submissions that I have read identify volunteers as crucial and highlight the importance of recruiting and supporting them. What are we doing in

Scotland that is equivalent to the Manchester volunteer sport bureau?

Kim Atkinson: I echo Stewart Harris's greed—the idea of community hubs is an ambition for us all. The Manchester volunteer sport bureau, starting from the Commonwealth games, identified a big challenge—as Stewart mentioned—around the database. The bureau had 20,000 volunteers, but it took two years to overcome the data protection issues to allow it to contact the volunteers to use them again.

The Olympics and the Paralympics have overcome that challenge, and Glasgow 2014 Ltd is working to ensure that such a problem does not happen. Glasgow 2014 Ltd is now looking for around 15,000 volunteers; my guess—certainly my hope—is that it will get a lot more people interested than just those 15,000 people who will end up volunteering at the games themselves. There is a huge opportunity for everyone else—and I know that Glasgow 2014 Ltd is already working on this—to say, “Maybe there is not space for you here, but are you aware of all these other opportunities in your community?” That is important.

With regard to our on-going work, we are supporting our members—as Stewart Harris said—to recruit board directors: people who are interested in volunteering in the governing body at that level. We are a staff of two, and we are trying, along with a network of professional organisations—as Lee Cousins mentioned—to fill some of those challenging governance areas. That is a starter for us.

The governing bodies are doing a huge amount of work to support volunteers through partnership programmes and, with support from sportscotland, by working with local authorities and sports councils. There are good examples such as orienteering clubs, which, through the support that the governing body provides, have volunteer managers who are responsible for trying to identify new people and retain current members. Nanette Milne raised the issue of retention, and there is a key opportunity to ensure that people enjoy what they are doing and are having fun, because that is the most important element.

The governing bodies are working to ensure that people are not overburdened, and they try to designate roles to different people with different interests. That is a key element, but it takes people on the ground, who are usually volunteers, to say, “I’ll take that on and try to find new people, and help people”. There is a huge opportunity—as Stewart Harris and Mary Allison said—to tap into the resource of younger people. I volunteered from when I was around 14, so I can empathise in that regard, and I think that there is huge potential there.

The governing bodies are doing a great deal of work on coaching and officiating programmes, which attract a lot of people. Coaching is often—as Lee Cousins and Mary Allison said—a very high-profile part of volunteering; it is the bit in which people want to be involved. The governing bodies, with support from sportscotland, have invested a huge amount in supporting coaching structures. We have had feedback from those bodies to suggest that the coaches who have been through those programmes have increased confidence and capacity and feel that they are better at coaching. That is testament to the fact that those programmes are working; a huge amount has been done in that regard.

The convener's point about equity and the challenges in deprived communities is very fair. Volunteering is at its lowest level in such communities, certainly in sport and, I am sure, throughout the wider voluntary sector. There are opportunities for employer-supported volunteering in those communities, as the challenge of finding time is exacerbated there, but we need to target those employers if we want more participation. Those people are able to volunteer and they have the same capacity and skills as everyone else, but they need time, perhaps more so than any other group. If they are working in two jobs, time really is a pressure for them. How can we try to release some of that time so that those people can create more capacity and activity in their communities for the community members?

The Convener: I call John Howie, who has not spoken yet. Other people can, of course, come back in later.

John Howie (NHS Health Scotland): NHS Health Scotland's involvement can probably be considered to be less direct, but we consider three key areas to be a helpful resource for volunteers. The first relates to generating a confident and skilled volunteer workforce, which concerns access to our e-learning resources and the future design of community sport hubs as a health-promoting resource that provides access to advice about smoking, healthy eating and alcohol. That additional resource will greatly benefit the future design of community sport hubs. E-learning resources are also provided for individuals to tap into for support and advice on the benefits of physical activity.

The second area relates to marketing existing clubs and organisations. The active Scotland website, which Health Scotland manages, links to 2,700 organisations. People can tap in their postcode on that free resource in order to identify their local clubs. That also supports clubs and volunteers in generating business.

The third area concerns generating participation. Clubs depend on getting people to

participate in the activities that are on offer. There are developments such as signposting from primary care—we have a pilot that will commence in January on brief advice and interventions, whereby general practitioners and primary care nurses will refer, or signpost, individuals to a range of physical activity options, one of which is sport. That useful support will generate participation by people who do not normally participate in sport.

Lee Cousins: Another key point is that we must not regard volunteers as an amorphous blob—they are all different. The Manchester experience concerned event volunteers. A lot of those volunteers came back not only for sport events but for arts events and parades, but most came back to do other events—they were not the long-term committed volunteers who are the life-blood of clubs and organisations. Such people can be there, as I was—I was fortunate to work for sportscotland, which was a wonderful flexible employer, so I could volunteer at half past 3 on a Tuesday afternoon at my wife's school hockey club. A commitment to volunteer every Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday is required, which needs a different type of person. Dealing with that is a bottom-up process; it is not done from the top. It is about building capacity locally.

Some support is needed. The most effective volunteering in Scotland is probably in colleges and universities, which have quite a lot of infrastructure and support to help clubs to operate and to grow treasurers, chairmen and match secretaries. If that is not a natural part of a community or activity, it needs to be found and supported. There is probably a role for local authorities to get among clubs and to build capacity at the lower level, particularly in governance.

The Convener: There is a wee contradiction in the evidence. You are doing what politicians do; when we want a volunteer, they must be absolutely committed and they must be there five nights a week.

Lee Cousins: Some of them have to be.

The Convener: That is totally the wrong message, according to evidence that we have received, which tells us that we need to be specific about what we require people to do and give them exit routes. We know that a lot of volunteers come in with their children and leave with their children. They are not superheroes.

We have heard this morning that there is a task for employers and local authorities. Do groups such as yours have a joint strategy that focuses on recruiting volunteers? I take it from your answers—you can correct me if I am wrong—that you do not.

10:00

Mary Allison: We have a framework that we share with a number of national and local partners, which sets out clearly the actions that we are going to take to engage, support and recognise the efforts of volunteers. It is a very simple framework. It will tell you what we are doing with Scottish Student Sport as a partner to support the workforce that Lee Cousins has talked about, and what we are doing through the active schools network with our partners on the organising committee of Glasgow 2014 and the Youth Sport Trust. We will have two peer leaders in every school who will support the young people there and act as role models for volunteering. We will also share a portal with Volunteer Development Scotland, which we have already started working on, to ensure that people who want to volunteer are well aware of the opportunities to do that and can easily contact people in sport. That will also involve proactive work.

We have set out in the framework the measures that we will use, the partners that we are working with and the actions that we are taking, and we can easily make that available to the committee.

The Convener: We look forward to that future action. I will let Lee Cousins back in briefly before we return to Nanette Milne.

Lee Cousins: The point that I was trying to make is that there is a complete range of volunteers. There are some from whom we need only a couple of hours a week or a couple of hours a month, and there are some from whom we need five to 10 hours a week; it depends on the role. The plea that I was trying to make is that we do not regard volunteers as an amorphous mass—they are all different and the ways to recruit and retain them are not the same, but depend on the roles that we are looking to fill. It is about setting out the purpose with clarity, and about demonstrating leadership, as Stewart Harris said. Nearly all governing bodies have some volunteer development programme but, in the end, it will be down to the 13,000 clubs individually to do their own recruitment.

Nanette Milne: You have perhaps just touched on this. Is the bureaucracy around becoming a volunteer off-putting? I remember once having to fill in a form for the Women's Royal Voluntary Service that was a huge amount of paper, which I found quite daunting. Is it the same for people volunteering in sport?

Lee Cousins: I do not think that the problem is for the individual. If we want them to fill out a child protection form, for example, we just hand them the form. As Kim Atkinson said, the difficulty is for the volunteer manager or volunteer organiser—that is where the bureaucracy falls. It falls not on

the individual volunteer but on the person who is trying to recruit and organise, and that can be off-putting.

Kim Atkinson: I agree absolutely with that, but the research does not show that the bureaucracy is off-putting for people at all. We can do more to support people. The point that Lee Cousins makes is absolutely correct. Many people say that they do not volunteer because they have never been asked. Who does the asking and how do we increase that workforce on the ground? Clubs have volunteer managers who work with local authorities, and I am sure that the active schools programme has been so successful in recruiting volunteers partly because there is somebody out there asking, "Would you like to volunteer? This is what it'll look like. You'll have a great time. Here's what you'll get out of it." Building that capacity is part of the challenge, and those people need support.

In the context of a club, it is about saying how we will help volunteers and make sure that volunteering is fun and easy for them. Equally, it is about telling employers how we will help and support them. The database that Mary Allison talked about is exactly what is needed. There are a few examples of such databases, but that is it. How do we focus people on the database that provides them with information on what volunteering is going to look like and how they can get involved? The research does not show that as a challenge, but I still think that we can do more in that regard.

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): Good morning. I would like to move from volunteering to participation. I suspect that there is a chicken-and-egg aspect in that the more people who participate, the bigger the pool of potential volunteers will be. I will put some statistics on the record regarding the challenge that we face in trying to make people more physically active and to get more people participating in sport.

The let's make Scotland more active strategy, which dates back to 2003, has a target of 50 per cent of all adults aged over 16, and 80 per cent of children aged 16 and under, meeting the minimum recommended levels of physical activity by 2022. I understand that we have not captured the under-16 stats on that, but have some of the adult stats. They show that in both 2008 and 2010 the figure remained at 39 per cent. That is not fantastic—it is a fairly stagnant baseline for those stats—but there is some room for optimism. I had a look at the household survey that was referred to previously, which shows that, although people are not meeting the target of doing physical exercise five days a week, they are more physically active. In 2009-10, 72 per cent of people had been physically active in a significant way in the

previous month, and that figure increased to 75 per cent in 2010-11. Perhaps beneath the tip of that iceberg of inactivity, there is more activity that we are just not reaching five days a week.

There is a significant challenge. There are some optimistic signs but also significant inequalities in the levels of participation and that is really the beef of my question. The data that have been provided to the committee show that there are three main areas of inequality, although I am sure that there are more. First, people in urban areas are less likely to participate in sport than those in rural areas. People in deprived communities, which are quite often in urban areas, are less likely to participate in sport than those who live in areas that are not deprived. There is also a significant gender gap in sports participation, which echoes many of the health inequalities in society. I note that representatives of NHS Health Scotland are with us. Whether it is via community sport hubs or volunteers, or whether it is a case of NHS Health Scotland signposting people, I am keen to know what is the strategy to increase sports participation generally. I do not want fit and healthy people doing more exercise—although that would be good—but want people who are unfit and not healthy to start doing exercise. What is the strategy to address those three significant inequalities?

John Howie: Thank you for that range of well-made points. Mr Doris is correct that the target is to have 80 per cent of children engaged in the minimum levels of physical activity per week, by 2022. The current data from the Scottish health survey show that, when school activities are included, 72 per cent of children were meeting that target—75 per cent of boys and 70 per cent of girls.

Mr Doris will be aware that new guidelines are being issued on weekly requirements and the range of activity levels across the life stages. The requirements are for 180 minutes, seven days a week for unaided preschool children; 60 minutes, seven days a week for school children; 30 minutes, five days a week for adults; and there are some guidelines for people aged 65 and older. There is additional advice around activities and about muscle and bone strength and general strength and balance training. The data on children are encouraging, and they underline the role of schools in respect of how levels of physical activity rise with the inclusion of school-based activities.

I refer to the population groups that were highlighted by Mr Doris. Our knowledge of those groups has been well rehearsed and that knowledge has encouraged a range of different targeted interventions in the past. With regard to females and teenage girls, the girls on the move

project was a significant investment of just over £1 million from 2005 to 2011.

Small grants to community groups have generated significant benefits—62 per cent of participants were more active and one third of those were from the most deprived areas. Targeted small investments into populations where needs are known to be greatest, and use of different supports and trained local staff can have major impacts.

We are keen to have that success repeated throughout the country. Rather than have small pockets of very good practice, we want that range of activity to be more broadly based. The work in building on the Scottish charter for physical activity is examining a framework for physical activity and a range of interventions such as environmental design, activities within the workplace and within education, and planning arrangements. Those will contribute to different levels of physical activity throughout the day. That work is on-going and will be critical to how we pool the various activities that are required to ensure a more active nation, which includes activities to be engaged in during the day, not just specifically sporting activities.

Sport and active recreation are significant parts of the overall framework. By working together, we want to ensure that we focus on the populations who are less likely to engage in any form of activity and on those who are less likely to engage in sport.

Ann Kerr (NHS Health Scotland): I would like to speak about the very early age group, because the foundation of our ability to participate in any form of physical activity or sport is laid in the very early years of life.

One big initiative that we have supported over the last few years, alongside the Government's play, talk, read campaign, is the play@home initiative, which is working through health visitors and nurseries to support active play among the under-ones, toddlers and in the pre-school years. We have done a first-stage evaluation of the initiative, which shows small but modest gains in basic motor skills in toddlers, so we are trying to build up steadily a universal programme. The books go to most children in the under-ones and we are steadily building up the nursery-age capacity. National roll-out of a programme that is based on one from New Zealand is now in place.

Mary Allison: Across sportscotland and the SSA we are reasonably clear that the skills that the national health service can bring are in reaching people who are completely inactive and who have not, as adults, been active for some time. Such people have issues with confidence and with choosing activities.

Sportscotland is focused on preparing the cohort of young people to maximise their chances of maintaining an active life in the future, and on looking at some of the inequalities in that area. Some of our work in the fit for girls project, which partners some of the work with girls on the move, has focused on the issue that we know emerges in the teenage years and about which we know we can do more. We have learned from the fit for girls project about what more we can do through the active schools network and through physical education to engage better with teenage girls, and better meet their needs. We should, rather than seeing them as the problem, sometimes see the services that we provide to them as being the problem, so we should change those services. We are being effective in working with schools to change some services through good leadership in the schools and good buy-in from headteachers to champion the need to do things like that for girls, and not to assume that one size will fit all in a secondary school environment.

Our energy is focused on ensuring that we maximise the chances for young people to get the right kind of skills, that they have the confidence and that they are in the right environment to see them through a longer period of life. We know that young people who go into further or higher education are far more likely to maintain an active life for life, so there are clearly benefits from that environment. We are working on things in that environment with Scottish Student Sport, which now covers further and higher education, and therefore reaches a far greater number of young people post-school.

There is a connection between initiatives such as paths to health, which is an NHS-partnered activity, and work that we do through Scottish Athletics, jogscotland and Scottish Swimming, which helps with the very basic level of adult swimming for health and fitness. It is about appropriately involving specific sports at times, but not overclaiming the impact that sports-specific clubs can have in dealing with all issues of inactivity. We are clear that sport can make a major contribution but cannot solve every issue of inactivity because—as John Howie and Ann Kerr have said—a much wider joined-up effort across transport, health and the environment that we live in is required to support people to have a more active life. The 30 minutes a day of moderate activity is unlikely to come, in any circumstance anywhere in the world, entirely from sport; it will be made up of a mix of sport and other ways of living actively.

Kim Atkinson: The issue of equality was raised. I whole-heartedly agree with Ann Kerr's comments. If we are to provide an equitable baseline for people to participate in sport, it is

about sport in schools. I know that a huge amount of work is going on in that regard.

If every young person leaves school with the belief that sport is a cultural norm and that to take part in sport and physical recreation is a normal part of daily life, you have set a framework. If they believe that sport is fun and, as Ann Kerr said, have the confidence to take part, that is a key strand.

The third part is what is commonly referred to as physical literacy, which means being able to run, jump, throw, catch and swim. If every young person leaves primary school able to do those things, that will set the foundation—everybody will have the same chance to start with—which is not to say that work does not need to be done elsewhere.

10:15

Some of the specific interventions that John Howie and Ann Kerr talked about make a huge difference. It is important that, when we know that best practice exists, we can replicate it. The jogscotland programme that Mary Allison mentioned is a great example of best practice. I know that Scottish Swimming and a number of other governing bodies support that. In that programme, people start by walking. Interventions through which people who are not active at all can start to get active in a friendly and fun way are a huge opportunity. People can go along with others, which makes it easy for them, and they do not have to be fit to start—those programmes start to get people fit.

Such programmes and interventions can lead into club sport. People who participate as members of one of the 13,000 sports clubs participate more often and for longer than people who participate outwith the club structure. Clubs provide that basis, so that is a huge opportunity in its own right. Sport also provides fun and social activities. I am sure that, when the committee speaks to Harry Burns, he will talk about the huge benefit of the social connectedness and activities that are provided through sporting club networks.

As members will be aware, the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on sport meets this evening. There will be a few good examples at that, such as the Active Communities programme, which used to be jogscotland's jogging buddies programme. We will be able to send on information from that meeting. This evening, there will also be a number of case studies from Atlantis Leisure and the Tryst community sports club showing how communities have got involved and have found out their needs and tried to reflect them, not only to increase participation

opportunities, but to bring the associated benefits that sport provides.

Stewart Harris: We have heard lots of examples of practice, but in order to sustain and grow participation, we need integrated provision. That was one recommendation of the previous Health and Sport Committee's inquiry on pathways into sport, and we have certainly taken that on board. Good practice tells us that sportscotland, the local authority and its agencies and the national health service have to work together strategically. As the convener commented earlier, we work together nationally, but that is also critical locally, because participation growth is supported there. That is about sustainable infrastructure. I return to my point about the use of schools. A range of facilities are available, whether private or publicly owned. The way forward is to look at the provision strategically to support growth in participation and to sustain existing participation, but that will not happen on its own with small projects.

Bob Doris: You have all given worthy examples but, as you would expect, we politicians want to map things out and quantify success. Politicians usually move away from targets but, in this case, targets are important. We need raw data to show, for example, how many sports clubs tailor their activities for females and how many exist in deprived areas. Is any mapping exercise under way so that, in two or three years, we can say that the approach has been wonderfully successful? I hope that we will be able to say that but, equally, if it has not been successful, we will have to consider how to change our approach and direction. What data will be collected in the next couple of years? The issue is not just about increased general participation, because that can mask growing inequalities in health and physical participation. What attempts are being made to capture progress in relation to urban settings, deprived areas and gender inequalities?

Mary Allison: Through our active schools programme, we constantly monitor the range that is on offer and the uptake among different schools. Our main goal in collecting the data is to reflect them back to the network so that schools are clear about what is going on in their patch; perhaps, for example, an active schools co-ordinator has done innovative work and has managed to get the figures up. That is about getting the schools together. Networking and sharing practice is a big part of what we do, and have been doing for some time, in the active schools network.

We are now replicating some of that with the community sport hubs. We are gathering data in a similar way to share with those community hub leaders. Of course, that work is community led. We cannot dictate from the centre what activities

should be provided in a community; we respond to communities' desire to provide for themselves. However, we use the data to reflect back to communities what they are achieving and the range of activities and groups that are involved, year on year, so that people can see the trends. We bring hubs together so that they can learn from one another. For example, if a community in Dundee has achieved something that another group of people has been struggling with, we can suggest that people go and see what has been done in Dundee.

Monitoring and collecting data enables us to keep an eye on things from a national perspective, but the principal reason for such activity is to feed information back to communities and to show them the emerging best practice that will solve issues that they are dealing with. We are not entirely shaping the agenda.

Ann Kerr: Bob Doris is right to say that it is about more than participation and that we need to know who is participating and whether participation is sustained. We have done that with small, specialist targeted projects; doing it on a wider scale, so that we can ascertain whether we are reaching deprived groups or a particular group of young women in an area is time consuming. If we say to people who have been putting a huge effort into growing participation during the past few years, "Actually, we need this information and that information", we present them with a big challenge. We need to address the issue and adapt what we have learned from small specialist projects, so that information can be recorded easily—perhaps by having people log in when they turn up—and no great effort is required to pull out information that can show whether a project is reaching a deprived community or getting 14-year-old girls to participate for the duration of a course. The challenge is in how we will do it efficiently on a wider basis.

Bob Doris: Thank you for your answers. It would be good to have more information—you could provide it in writing—about how you grab data. You want to do that in a way that is not bureaucratic, of course, because participation in physical activity and sport is more important than data collection. However, it would be useful if this or a future committee could map out the success—I will not add "or otherwise"—of projects. Given the health benefits of physical activity, such information would bolster your arguments for getting more funding.

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): We talked about the size of sports clubs in Scotland compared with other countries. If I have the figures right, we have 13,000 clubs, of which 3,000—or about a quarter—are registered with the SSA. I presume that those clubs feed into the

sports governing bodies. We heard that clubs in other countries are much bigger, which I suspect makes governance much easier. Those 13,000 clubs must need nearly 50,000 volunteers to fill the posts of treasurer, chairman, secretary and so on. That is a hell of a lot of volunteers just to deal with basic governance.

We seem to be pinning our hopes on community sport hubs. How will they bring small clubs together, to help them with governance and ensure that volunteers who are recruited are not having to become chairs, secretaries and treasurers, which are jobs that many people who are engaged in sport do not want to do? How can we make the system much more efficient?

Stewart Harris: That is a good question. Our work to grow participation in and the infrastructure for sport is based on the community sport hub principle. At the Tryst community sport hub in Larbert, there is great collaboration between a range of small clubs that were previously dotted about the area, a big secondary school, a golf club, a cricket club and a football club. We have managed to bring all that together.

That takes me back to leadership. The management group that is running the hub includes the headteacher of the secondary school and the director of the football club. It is really exciting for me because we now have nine sports. Previously, we were all working independently and now we are working together. The growth in participation is exciting—almost 800 young people now participate across a range of those sports—and we need to maintain it.

Collaboration is a key point, as is the fact that the clubs can call the school and the associated facilities around it their home. They can call those places their home rather than having to be nomadic.

Some really exciting things are happening around community sport hubs that are based on the principle of growing participation, sustaining that effort and collaboration through people and, critically, making the facility accessible to the community. For a club to grow, however, it needs to be able to access the school for more time. At the moment, a club cannot get a lot of access at weekends and in the later evenings. Again, if I was being greedy, I would make the club responsible for the entire school and the community responsible for a range of sports and its own destiny.

Dr Simpson: Why are there problems with getting access during the weekends and evenings?

Stewart Harris: It is usually because of the public-private partnership contracts. Sometimes it is because of other contracts with other groups

and the fact that it takes time to break all that down and bring together something new. It might be as simple as encouraging a group that is working on its own to become part of the greater collective. Often, however, the problems are to do with the contract or access to the facility at certain times.

We are working on the issue. SportsScotland is examining access to schools through a study in all 32 local authorities that is looking at the exact situation in every school.

The Convener: That is due at the end of the year, but do you have any interim work that can be shared with the committee?

Mary Allison: Not at this stage. We have all the data that we require from a number of local authorities, and we have most but not all from others. We are still in negotiation with a few local authorities on the information that we need.

The Convener: I wonder whether we could be of any assistance with that. It would be interesting for the committee to have that information for our inquiry. Perhaps you could let us know from which authorities you need more information. That might be something that the committee could consider and push along.

Stewart Harris: We have done the study because lots of general statements are made about schools not being open. We would rather find out the specific situation in each local authority area and in each school so that we can then address it with the local authorities. There is no doubt that the existing capacity in schools offers potential for growth, but we have to free it up.

Dr Simpson: Mr Cousins raised the issue of the size of clubs. Why are our clubs so small when they can be huge in other countries?

Lee Cousins: Part of it relates to what Stewart Harris said about the stability of having a home and a facility. A lot of our more secure clubs in bowling, tennis and golf are some of our larger clubs because they have a home and a long-term occupation of that home. A lot of our hockey clubs, basketball clubs and hall sport clubs in particular do not have the stability of having their own home so they cannot do long-term planning.

One of the key reasons for the weakness of our clubs and volunteers is that they tend to be weak at continuity and succession planning. It is very difficult for a club to get into the long-term thinking mode if it does not have the stability of knowing where it is going to be next year and whether it has access to the school next term. There is quite a lot of that.

The other issue that makes us slightly different from some of our continental neighbours is the

sheer number of sports that we have. One thing that defines Scottish, and perhaps United Kingdom, sport is its diversity. We tend to try to do 50, 60 or 70 activities while some of the continental countries try to do around 20. That obviously dissipates and changes membership.

It is also the case that, as Stewart Harris said, many of our clubs are single-sport clubs, whereas some of the continental clubs will offer four or five sports in one location. As has been said, the governance requirements are reduced because only one president is needed when five or six sports are available in one place, which is not the case when they are provided in five or six different places.

10:30

Dr Simpson: Will the hubs help with that?

Stewart Harris: Absolutely. As I said, we have nine sports available in the hub in Larbert. Other hubs are showing exciting results, with the number of sports on offer in double figures.

If I were greedy, I would say that we should consider making every secondary school in Scotland a sport hub. If what has happened at Larbert high school, Stenhousemuir Football Club and the other sports clubs around the school were replicated, the difference in the situation in Scotland would be fantastic, but it will take commitment nationally and locally for that to happen.

The Convener: Some people have said that, in general, sport hubs are a good idea but can become a barrier to more casual access. Some of the evidence that we have received reflects that. What would you say to that? With the hubs, access to sport becomes formal, so informal engagement with sport and activity suffers. It is like what happens when people see all the Lycra in the gym: those who should be going to the gym think, "I'm not going near that place." It becomes overly sporty and it is not the entry point that people would like to have—there is a bit of elitism.

Stewart Harris: We are trying not to have a one-size-fits-all approach. Our experience in Calderglen in South Lanarkshire is that just because a formal sports club is there—it is a basketball club—that does not mean to say that the activity that is on offer is formal; it can be quite recreational.

We are looking at attaching walking, jogging, swimming and other recreational activity clubs to community sport hubs. Older age groups can be involved in that way. We are tackling the issue by adopting a growth model, not by trying to do everything at once. We want to build things in a sustainable, manageable way. Although I can

understand the comments to which you refer, they should not deflect us from our strategic approach of building things sustainably. It is absolutely possible to have activity groups that are attached to, and which have their home in, a community sport hub.

Ann Kerr: There is also the issue of open access. How many of our school estates are completely closed off and not accessible to the public out of hours, even just for a knockabout game of something? We also have a fantastic inheritance of the public parks that the Victorians built. How easy is it to access the pitches or the courts just for a knockabout? That is the sort of openness that we could be looking at.

Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP): I welcome all the witnesses and thank them for what has been an extremely informative past hour.

I have two specific questions, the first of which is aimed at Stewart Harris. I have to say to you, "Be greedy." I welcome the investment that the Scottish Government has made in community hubs and I welcome sportscotland's commitment to them, but is that enough? In my experience, some people believe that a hub would take over the school or the park. It is true that we have a lot of parks that are unused—I will come back to that in a minute—but if we had a sport hub in every town or, as you suggested, every secondary school, we could concentrate clubs in one place.

At local level, we have sports councils, local authorities, sportscotland, the Scottish Sports Association and the NHS. Everyone is doing a lot of good work—I compliment you on what you are doing—but I do not feel that there is joined-up working. Would local sport hubs join up all the groups and create a place where everyone could go? Again in my experience, a lot of clubs do not know who to contact or even know the club in the next town, because of data protection legislation. The minute you phone someone up, they say, "No—we can't give you that information. It comes under the data protection act." How can we get more joined-up working?

Stewart Harris: This is an absolutely vital issue. There is no choice but for all local agencies and sportscotland to work together with an integrated plan for growing participation and improving standards of coaching, facilities and performance.

I agree that what we have is not enough. Investment in community sport hubs is a starter for 10, and we are looking to expand and develop them. We are also beginning to look at how we might support sport-specific clubs to grow in their own homes. You can, if you like, call it the legacy of the Commonwealth and Olympic games, but we are using those two major events to accelerate our ambition of making sport a part of everyday life

and growing it to allow people to experience it for whatever reason, whether they simply want a bit of fun and some social time with friends or want to be the best that they can be.

I must stress that sportscotland really values its partnerships with local government. Many years ago, it had a relationship with only a few authorities. We now have a very strong strategic relationship with all 32, which offers a chance for us to get into hard-nosed examinations of our assets and how we use them collectively for the greater good.

The Convener: We might well come back to this issue, but I note that many local authorities have arm's-length organisations. Concerns have also been expressed about sustaining and maintaining assets and about their cost.

Lee Cousins: As well as providing a home for clubs and being able to add activities, community sport hubs could play a role in sharing and passing on information. You could use them, for example, to advertise volunteering opportunities and requirements and to share knowledge with the local clubs in an area. I certainly hope that that will be a strong part of where they are. After all, as Stewart Harris has pointed out, these are as much community hubs as they are community sport hubs.

Richard Lyle: That very much brings us back to Lee Cousins's earlier point about the time required to be a volunteer. One thing that we are forgetting is the cost of volunteering and in particular, as Ann Kerr noted, the cost of premises. There are 32 local authorities and various trusts and leisure facilities. However, my son tells me that it now costs £40 to hire a hall for volleyball and that, because of the cost, he has moved the activity to a school. I can tell that Stewart Harris loved that one.

Thousands of people are doing a lot of good work but they have to collect the pound, £2 or whatever from the kids every week to pay for the facilities, the park and so on. How can we regularise or even reduce the cost of being of volunteer? I believe, for example, that it costs around £40 or £50 to submit disclosure forms, and such costs discourage many people. As Bob Doris has pointed out, many come from disadvantaged areas. They want to go to the park to play football, but they are unable to pay the £30, £40 or whatever to rent the grounds. What can we do to reduce the cost of volunteering?

Lee Cousins: First of all, I must correct you. Criminal Records Bureau checks for volunteers in sport are free.

Richard Lyle: I stand corrected.

Lee Cousins: That is one of the nice policy moves that have taken place.

The Convener: Does anyone wish to respond to Richard Lyle's question? After all, some of the evidence suggests that cost is not one of the biggest barriers.

Mary Allison: Sportscotland monitors charges for sports facilities every year and has done so for the past decade. In the past year—in which we would expect to see some real pressure points—the majority of sports facility charges have gone up less than the retail prices index. The rate at which the cost of sport is going up is less than the rate for many other activities. In some cases, the cost has not gone up at all. For activities such as aerobics and keep fit sessions, for example, there was a change of 0.1 per cent per session.

Although there will undoubtedly be a change in the cost for some groups to use some facilities in some places, the charging position throughout Scotland as a whole is still relatively stable and has not changed significantly over many years.

The Convener: Can you share some of that information with the committee? It would be useful for the wider discussion.

Mary Allison: We can do that.

On the cost of training as a volunteer, there is for example a significant amount of subsidy to get a level 1 coaching award, which is the basic entry point into coaching. In most cases it is free by the time that people have applied to the various sources of funding. We can get better at ensuring that the information is available to people, but the service and the subsidy are there.

Kim Atkinson: Joined-up working is at the heart of the issue. A huge amount of work is being done, although that is not to say that we cannot do more, because we can always strive to improve.

We work on behalf of the governing bodies: for clarification, we are the representative body for the governing bodies for the different sports in Scotland. There are 13,000 sports clubs, the vast majority of which are members of a governing body. The figure of 3,000 that Richard Simpson quoted came from the Scottish Parliament information centre briefing and relates to the Scottish Association of Local Sports Councils. I think that Ollie Barsby from SALSC is on the next panel, so he can provide some clarity on that.

We work closely with SALSC and Scottish Student Sport, so there is a collaboration among the governing bodies, the universities and the local sports councils. The word "legacy" is bandied about a lot, and we work together to ask what that legacy will be. Community sport hubs are a key strand and a key opportunity in that regard.

The three collective bodies, on behalf of their members, came up with three key areas. Those are focused on two hours of quality physical education to provide physical literacy and regular activity; better support for coaches and volunteers, which we have discussed a lot today; and better use of existing facilities and places.

As Mary Allison said, facilities do not have to be expensive: there are a lot of facilities that can, with a small amount of investment, make a big difference. That might involve opening up existing estates such as schools or looking at natural resources in the environment. There are a huge number of accessible ways in which people can get active, and working together is a huge part of that.

Local authorities are a key strand, as I am sure they would agree. They have assets and opportunities through having a local base—as we mentioned earlier—from which to recruit people and get them involved. There is local capacity, and 90 per cent of sports funding in Scotland goes through local authorities. They play a particularly significant part, but working together is the most important thing. We are all striving to do more, and there is more that we can do.

Ann Kerr: We have heard about collaboration and examples of work that is taking place around community sport hubs, but I want to draw attention to the partnerships that are developing between local authorities and health boards. Those are different across the country: they might involve a healthy weight strategy, a council's sports strategy or a health board's physical activity strategy. NHS Tayside offers a good example of collaboration across sectors on a physical activity strategy, which brings together partners to improve dialogue and help to address the issues around equity and local variability in access.

The Convener: We know that that work is happening in local areas and health board areas, and even within those areas there will be differences. The question in which I am interested is: how could those partnerships between the local authority and the health board be improved by the expertise that exists? How are they all linked in?

Ann Kerr: We have two link-in forums on physical activity and health. One is a special interest group that takes a lead on physical activity from each health board, so that representatives come together to share practice and information, respond to consultations and so on.

There is also a wider physical activity and health alliance, which is a much broader 900-strong cross-sectoral group. The group is holding its annual conference next week at Murrayfield, and we expect 300 people—about a third of the active membership—to attend. The membership cuts

across health board staff in particular. A lot of active schools co-ordinators are involved, and there is a scattering of academics, so there is a good mix of people to share practice.

10:45

The Convener: It is admirable that all that goes on, but it does not reassure me that all those people are looking for the improved outcome of increased physical activity and a fitter society, with all the benefits that that can bring for people's physical and mental health. It may be a hangover from going through all the papers and written submissions but, by Jove, it seems to me that a hang of a lot of people are doing the same thing when what is available to us in physical resources and finance is very precious indeed. It is just an observation, but I think that the connections could be better. Do you want to respond to that, John?

John Howie: I think you are right, convener. There is effective strategy and practice across the country. I have recently looked at Inverclyde's physical activity strategy, which is a good example of partners working closely together to deliver on what we know requires to be delivered. There is also no argument about the important impact that physical activity has on the health and wellbeing of people in Scotland. The let's make Scotland more active policy is excellent. It was reviewed after five years and the same messages were reinforced. Where we needed to improve was clearly highlighted.

The challenge is to have collective delivery at a national level and see consistent delivery across all local areas. That work has been developed over the past year, building on the Toronto charter for physical activity. We have developed our own Scottish charter from the grassroots, with a range of deliverables that we want to see in place. We are working on a framework that will pull the various strands of activity together at a national level, and we will look at ways and means of ensuring more consistent local interventions.

We are at the stage at which we recognise the need for a more collaborative national mechanism for delivering on the range of activities that we need to deliver on in active living and improving rates of physical activity across Scotland.

Stewart Harris: Convener, I will try to reassure you a bit about the strategic position. In my mind, given what I see and experience around local authority areas, it is far better than it was, although it is still not as good as it could be.

What is the key to improvement? It is about each organisation being very clear about which bit it does and there being some leadership. I still believe that it is the local authority's responsibility to provide local leadership to ensure that agencies

and partners are doing their piece without duplication.

We have just completed a strategy in Shetland after about six attempts. For the first time we have a strategy that has been signed off at every level and which is clear about who does what. I am excited about that because I think that we can eradicate a lot of duplication.

It is easy to talk about projects and programmes, but my view from my experience of the past half dozen years is that the strategic context is far better than it was, although there is still room for improvement.

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab): Kim Atkinson made the pertinent point that 90 per cent of the funding is through local authorities. However, there is the element of national spend as well. The SPICe paper shows that from 2007 onwards Government funding to sportscotland rose from £46 million to £49 million, and then came down to the current figure of £38 million. That immediately raises the question of what we do not do now that we used to do with that money. Rather than look at how the money is spent across the board by sportscotland, I would like to know how the proportions have changed for different areas, but particularly for community sport. What proportion of the money goes to community sport? What change has there been?

Stewart Harris: Obviously, if the budget figure is £38 million, we would love to retain that. I just want to put that on the record.

Sportscotland is in an interesting position because it is also a lottery fund distributor, and members will be aware that lottery proceeds have been going very well. We have been trying to manage that strategically, to ensure that, with our total pot of money, which is usually £60 million to £70 million, we support as much activity as we can.

We are also trying to be strong in making decisions about what are priorities and what are not. For example, the active schools programme has been in place for nearly 10 years. That is a number 1 priority and has been in the budget for a significant time. It is important that agencies such as sportscotland ensure that we fund the areas that are key priorities and, when times are tough, maybe lose some of the nice-to-dos round the edges.

We are committed to taking a systematic, ambitious approach to world-class sport. There is a huge debate about the phrase "world class", but whether we are talking about walking, running or jogging, it is important that we have that ambition.

Resources are key. We are talking to each authority about what our commitment will be

nationally and trying to guarantee that over a three or four-year period, not just a single year or single application. The strategic approach is much more stable and allows the local agencies to plan with much more certainty.

We are asking local authorities the same question. Rather than just commit to active schools on a year-to-year basis, we want a four-year commitment from local government on active schools. To an extent, we have received that commitment. Balancing resources is always a challenge, but we are quite fortunate in as much as we have Government commitment and can draw on lottery resources.

The balance between performance and community is beginning to swing the way of community. We have a system that supports high performance—about £15 million between ourselves and the governing bodies. Our ambition with new moneys and existing lottery moneys is to enhance, with local government, the community offer in the next half a dozen years. We hope that in the next few months we will be able to announce some of those things.

Drew Smith: I suppose that there is a tension with things such as active schools, in that the funding partners are local authorities. I appreciate that your funding will come through in lots of different ways, in terms of the training, the information that you provide, the resources and so on.

I am guessing that it is not essential in every case that there is an element of national funding for community sport hubs, but would you normally expect some national support to be provided to a hub?

Stewart Harris: There is an allocation for each one. The system is quite flexible. The aim at the end of the day is that a community sport hub should become sustainable, which is a challenge.

I will give you an example. The figures might not be completely accurate, but it has been calculated that, in order to be sustainable, the Tryst community sports club should take approximately £50,000 per annum. That is the ask for that group. We are providing something towards that—there are lots of contributors, including the football club and the local authority. Although we are not putting a deadline on it yet—we will go on as long as we need to—we hope that over a period it will become sustainable. That is the aim—we can then move that around.

Just as important is the fact that the UK Government has changed the shares of lottery funding, so we expect to get some additional resource back into sport, which is fantastic. We will use that primarily for community sport and for outdoor activities, which Kim Atkinson mentioned.

We think that there is real potential in developing the outdoor dimension of what sportscotland does.

Drew Smith: I think that up to 150 community sport hubs are planned overall, and 22 have been delivered so far. Given that there is national spend associated with them, why are they where they are? According to the list that I have here, three are planned in Glasgow, three are planned in Inverclyde and three are planned in Renfrewshire. However, six are planned in Stirling and three in Clackmannanshire—we are talking about three in Clackmannanshire versus three in Glasgow. I understand that different factors will be involved, but if we are spending national money on the hubs, why are we spending it in such a divergent way?

Stewart Harris: We have tried to put an allocation into each authority, based on a formula, which is based on a minimum amount. Even a small authority such as Clackmannanshire would get a minimum amount. The rest is based on population. We have tried to leave the decision making to each authority—the selection of the community sport hubs is a local decision; it is the local authority's choice.

The potential for growth in Glasgow, North Lanarkshire and some of the areas where the population is bigger is fantastic, but we cannot do it all at once. We are trying to learn as many lessons as we can. Glasgow also has a huge amount of other things going on. There are differences, and we take a customised approach to each authority.

We think that, if the signs continue as they are doing, there will be some real growth across the piece, with local authorities and other agencies considering where they put their existing resource and how they might better support more community sport hubs.

Drew Smith: I appreciate that, and I do not deny that there is other investment going on in Glasgow, but that argument would not necessarily apply to Inverclyde or Renfrewshire. That strikes me as strange: it is fine for such initiatives to be community led if funding is coming in at a community level, but we are talking about national spend that is being spent in a fairly divergent way.

Stewart Harris: But it is only a part of the spend.

Drew Smith: If your approach is that you want initiatives to be community led and to respond to demand within communities, you are merely spending money to support the areas with the highest demand, which might already have the highest levels of participation.

Stewart Harris: You could say that, but one of our ambitions was to get movement going across

the entire nation, and we wanted to take every local authority with us. We will look again at demand—there is no doubt about that—and find other resources to try to meet it.

Sportscotland has tried to take those infrastructure ideas to every part of the country, rather than just piloting them. We want to let everyone be part of the pilot, and we can think about demand and growth beyond that, depending on how people have dealt with it.

We will take our time to look at who is learning what, where the demand is and how we might accelerate growth in each area. We are taking a customised approach, with some national resources that are offset by local and community resources—the communities as well as the local agencies are putting a lot in.

Drew Smith: I have one last question on a related issue—cashback for communities. More than one of the witnesses might want to comment.

Who benefits from cashback for communities? Some of the submissions have raised the general issue of how and whether it works, given the difficulties of getting money from the justice services and how quickly that money comes through.

The key question is, do we have a clear idea of where the money comes from and where it is spent? Can we follow the pound?

Kim Atkinson: There are some really good examples. Research is still being compiled on the five multisport model—badminton, tennis, squash, hockey and athletics—but there is some good practice there.

Each programme has dealt with the matter slightly differently. Football, rugby and basketball were the first three sports to be involved, followed by the five multisport model, and boxing is now involved too. In each of those phases—for want of a better phrase—a slightly different approach has been taken that has operated with slightly different opportunities and boundaries, so different examples are coming out.

The basketball partnerships happen to be the examples that we know best, and they have shown some really strong results. Their success has been in the way in which they have delivered slightly differently, and in the way in which they have been allowed to use that investment in different kinds of partnerships—such as partnerships with schools and clubs—to try to ensure that they attract as broad a range of young people as they can. Their retention figures and their increased participation figures through their support for a range of new clubs in new areas have been quite impressive.

I realise that a lot of the research is still being compiled, but I have some figures on the basketball partnerships that I can send to the committee if that would be helpful. I know that football has been doing quite a lot as well. I am sure that each sport would say the same, but those just happen to be the ones that I know and can speak about off the top of my head.

Drew Smith: From a health inequalities point of view, I am particularly interested in whether the Government or the justice services that are involved know where that money is going. Surely they would want to know that we are not removing money from our more vulnerable and deprived communities and spending it in other places. My concern follows on from the concern about community sport hubs that money follows demand. If an application comes from somewhere, and you want to spend the money that you have, you will spend the money on those areas that have applied. Can the Government—or anyone else—show us a map that outlines the postcodes where money is raised and those where it is then spent through initiatives such as cashback for communities?

Kim Atkinson: Through monitoring, each governing body is able to demonstrate where different activities are gathered. The governing bodies have the lists of the people who participated and where they came from. That is part of the standard monitoring that the Scottish Government has undertaken.

For the activities that are already organised, I suppose that there are three key challenges around a sustained element of funding. Sometimes, quite a bit of time is needed. It has been a challenge to pull the partners together for investment in some of the more recent sports. Some of the governing bodies are slightly smaller, and it has been a challenge for them to find the right people with whom to work in each set of communities to try to make the investment happen. However, although those boundaries have been overcome and there has been huge success, it takes time to establish things because there is a rolling, three-year contract, and that has been another challenge.

11:00

The key question from our members concerns strategic planning. We have talked a lot today about finding case studies and examples of best practice and about how we roll those out. On behalf of our members, we have repeatedly asked what the strategic planning process is for identifying which sports, activities and programmes work best and determining how we work with them—I am sure that sportscotland

would echo that. Our members would be pleased to be involved in that process.

The question is, as you say, how we make use of a limited resource that has already shown that it can provide benefits in local communities, particularly in relation to the preventative spend agenda. The key is to ensure that there is a fit with existing clubs, that we get people involved in the club structure and that the resource helps with infrastructure and sustainability.

The Convener: Is there consultation? Is there an opportunity for you to have wider discussions on where lottery funding and money from cashback for communities go? Did the Government consult you on the communities cup sponsorship—that was the controversial one—and did you think that that was a good use of money? Will that sponsorship support and promote clubs, volunteers and activities?

Stewart Harris: Resources for sport are welcome. However, we would like the clear strategic approach that we have at a national level to be reflected locally.

There was consultation on the communities cup. Given our experience with Stenhousemuir, I would say that there is a real opportunity for the smaller football clubs to be leaders in the community—I would not exclude the bigger clubs from that, but it is certainly true of the smaller ones—and there is merit in taking that forward.

The Government does its own monitoring on the revenue side of the cashback programme, but we have a strong role in the facilities side, so we could let you know where the football, rugby and other projects are. We could let you have that information without any problem.

The Convener: So you not only discuss with Government the ambition to have as much activity throughout Scotland as possible, but you take into account need. That is what Drew Smith focused on in some earlier questions. All the evidence that we have received shows that deprived communities have less activity, fewer volunteers and fewer facilities because the articulate people who run the tennis clubs or whatever get the money.

The committee is very interested in what funding streams are available, and in where the money goes and what it supports. We also want to be assured that there is some element of addressing unmet need and that you target the priorities that need to be targeted.

Stewart Harris: I reassure you on that. We could give you a full list of where all our resources go. However, one initiative in particular has been quite big for us: we are now beginning to offer up to 100 per cent grants for small community

facilities. That approach has real potential. You are right that it is important to identify the right project with the right group. We rely on our local contacts to do that. However, we have a real ambition to spread the resources into smaller communities and deprived communities to enhance small community facilities.

We are also doing other things. We can give you the full list if that would be helpful.

The Convener: The committee needs to discuss who has the information that it wants, but we accept your kind offer and may return to it.

Lee Cousins: As Kim Atkinson said, 90 per cent of the resources that go to sport go through local authorities, so the majority of the identification of need and the matching of resources to that need happens, and should happen, at that level.

If the system is one in which you have a contract with local authorities and they are delivering on outcomes, that is where you are. It is quite hard to direct that nationally when decision making has already been devolved down to local authorities, which have 90 per cent of the resources that go into sport.

The Convener: This is our first panel session today—local government colleagues are waiting patiently for us to conclude.

Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP): I would like to stay with the subject of community sport hubs, not least because I have an example of good practice in my constituency—the Inch Park community sports club. I think that Mr Harris was at the opening of that facility, where we have rugby, football and cricket all under one roof. Most important, though, is that it works in collaboration with the local community through the active schools programme to grow participation in sport in the way that has been outlined this morning.

Mr Harris's ambition is for every secondary school in Scotland to be a community sport hub. What barriers are preventing schools from coming up to that standard? What do we need to do to achieve that ambition?

Stewart Harris: The study that we mentioned will give us a bit more insight into that. I also mentioned that there are some challenging contractual issues, and there may be some demand issues, where demand from the school may be in the wrong place. There is a range of factors.

We would prefer to discuss with each authority what is open and available, and how we can take that to another level. Let us get involved in any difficult discussions with PPP contractors. It might be easier for us to have a strong discussion about the health and ambition of the nation with

contractors than it would be for the local authority. We are absolutely up for that.

We probably need to consider innovative models for how schools are managed. There are many good examples of keyholder status and a much more flexible use of schools. Security is obviously an issue—that has to be managed responsibly—but if communities are to be sustainable and to have pride in their future, we must give them a bit more responsibility in how they manage, lead, direct and operate facilities. Do not get me wrong—I am not talking about all facilities, because lots of facilities need to be managed professionally. However, there is an opportunity for a collaborative effort between communities and professionals to make that happen. Inch Park is a good example of that. It is already looking at how it might have an impact on schools around that community.

Kim Atkinson: We are having our annual general meeting at Inch Park in a few weeks' time. We are looking forward to our visit and to getting all the governing bodies down there.

There are a few key priorities when it comes to opening up the school estate, accessing facilities and the other examples that have been mentioned. Stewart Harris mentioned the community hub idea. There are a range of different activities, such as sport, culture, arts and heritage, which provide the same sort of community service—for want of a better phrase—and have the social impact that comes from people in communities actively participating in something. The community hub idea provides a real opportunity for better use of existing resources and for bringing people together in a very different way. There is something really interesting about that.

As we have already said, one of the key principles that go round that is the better use of existing facilities. Accessibility is about evenings, weekends and holidays. I know that sportscotland is taking that into account in its review. You hear examples such as, "They're open at this time but not at that time." There are some key principles in there. There could be priority access for clubs—obviously, we would say for sports clubs, but for community clubs in their widest definition.

Lee Cousins spoke about a home for clubs. As he said, planning is a big challenge for a lot of clubs. If the club is in a school, it might have a lease until the end of X term, but does it have it for a second term? If it is in a local authority facility, does it have a lease beyond X month? If a club does not own facilities, how does it plan beyond the current year? Arrangements such as length of lease are a priority.

Another priority is the provision of a social area. Many clubs that have a social area—I know that Inch Park has one—provide a kind of heart in a local community. People can go along there, and the club provides additional social connectedness, intergenerational links and a lot of the things that we have spoken about. However, many sports clubs do not have a social area, so there is an important opportunity there to emphasise further the benefits of clubs and sports clubs that have such a facility.

Accessibility remains a challenge. I know that Gavin Macleod will emphasise that when our colleagues from Scottish Disability Sport come before the committee. Inclusion and access, and ensuring that facilities are accessible, are key priorities. Although a lot of really good work is going on, a few key principles underpin opportunities within existing facilities.

Jim Eadie: That is helpful. I am mindful of Mr Harris's offer to have some of the more robust discussions about opening up the school estate. I am sure that we will be in touch with you about that.

Stewart Harris: We really value our relationship with all 32 authorities, but many decisions about schools are made locally. Although we will play our part, we need our local authority colleagues to be right there.

There is already a huge amount of fixed cost in schools, in terms of the facility, the fabric and the human resource, so it should not be beyond us to come up with solutions that are quite cost effective. However, we are doing that collaboratively—we are not kicking people down the street.

Jim Eadie: So the barrier to achieving the ambition for every school to be a community sport hub may not be primarily financial.

Stewart Harris: I do not think that it is just a financial barrier. I love to be ambitious, and I hope that, in a few years' time, we will have this conversation and there will be 350 community sport hubs in Scotland.

Lee Cousins: Some of it is cultural. Across the range of types of schools management, you will see examples of extremely good sports provision, in which facilities in all sorts of institutional settings are open to the community. As Stewart Harris said, it generally comes down to leadership and whether the headteacher wants such provision. That individual and the culture are more important than the institutional framework within the school. Even from local authority to local authority, where you would expect a consistent education policy, I suggest that you will see quite vast differences. It comes down to the culture of the headteacher and the senior management team. We need to get that

culture of valuing sport and what it contributes to the community into the overall culture of education at the senior management team level.

Jim Eadie: For completeness, can I ask for the panel's views on the role that primary schools can play, particularly given the emphasis, in policy terms, on early years and Ann Kerr's comments about the need to encourage participation among young children at as early a stage as possible?

Ann Kerr: High-quality physical education in primary schools is critical. It builds on what children learn through active play—it is about taking active play through into active recreation, sport and dance. We need to build on that through the primary school, and our primary school teachers need to have a culture of valuing physical activity in all its forms.

Stewart Harris: Yes. Primary schools are key in offering young people a range of different opportunities, sports and activities in those early learning years, so that they are better equipped for the future. It is key that there is a commitment to physical education, and to after-school and community activities, at primary and secondary school levels.

Kim Atkinson: Primary schools are not the only places with responsibility, but they are the one place where every child should be and hopefully is. A child might not access opportunities via their family or life outside school, but primary schools capture everybody, so they have a huge responsibility.

I mentioned the three elements. Primary schools provide the opportunity for quality PE and for every young person to be physically literate—to run, jump, throw, catch and swim. If you have that, great. The interest among our members in the two hours of PE came from the idea of the culture of being regularly physically active. Do not get me wrong—two hours is the minimum, and ideally we would be looking for more than that. The active schools work and the work of other clubs builds on that. However, at the end of the day, if being regularly active is a cultural norm for children at that age, and if it is fun and they develop confidence, that is a great start. If they decide in later life that they want to take part in sport A or activity B, they will have the skills and confidence, and they will think that taking part will be fun. Those would be our priorities for primary schools.

11:15

Lee Cousins: If you asked the leaders of the governing bodies what is important to them, they would say that they would like to have children who are physically literate at the end of primary school, so that they can be developed in whatever sport they go into. They prioritise that ability above

turning someone into a rugby player or a swimmer.

John Howie: There is an important issue around how children get to and from their primary school. There must be a continued emphasis on active travel to school and ensuring that streets are safe for children to walk on. In that regard, we have touched on flexible working practices that enable carers and parents to support their young children to develop good walking habits that should follow through into their secondary school years.

Mary Allison: I want to reassure members about the intelligence and data that we are providing back to the networks of active school coordinators in primary schools, secondary schools and the hubs. Part of the reason for gathering the data that we are supporting them to gather locally, which we hold nationally and give back to them in the simple format that I explained earlier, is to allow primary schools, secondary schools and hubs to better co-ordinate and choose their activities so that we minimise the chances of primary schools doing one activity, secondary schools doing another and the hub doing something else. That is a bad scenario. We want each community to build on its strengths and assets. If an area has good volunteer coaches in a particular sport, we should ensure that the primary school, the secondary school and the hub all benefit from that. Part of our role nationally is to help them to plan better locally, to focus on their strengths and to ensure that they are using those strengths in every bit of their community space.

The Convener: I think Bob Doris is going to talk about some of those community assets.

Bob Doris: Actually, I was not going to follow up on that, but I will be incredibly brief in following up on Drew Smith's point.

We were looking for some more information around community sport hubs, and I am keen to ensure that we are comparing apples with apples when we consider the investment in communities. Someone might look at the figures and say, "Glasgow got three and Inverclyde got three—how does that come out of the sausage machine that decides these things?"

My understanding is that community sport hubs receive £1.5 million a year up to 2015-16, so it would be quite good to find out what the investment is per local authority. Obviously, some rural areas might have relatively small community sport hubs, with a small public sector investment. We should try to see whether things are commensurate.

I am also keen to find out what the strategy is for after 2014-15. The budget indicates that, in the next three years, £300 million of Scottish

taxpayers' money will go specifically to projects associated with the Commonwealth games—the Sir Chris Hoy velodrome, the national indoor sports arena, Tollcross pool and so on. They are almost sport hubs in all but name, and they are fantastic facilities, but we need to think about how we are going to use them productively after the Commonwealth games.

The final point that I want to put on record concerns cashback for communities. My understanding is that money is distributed by YouthLink Scotland—80 per cent based on population, 10 per cent based on rurality and remoteness and 10 per cent based on deprivation. I wonder whether Mr Howie or Ms Kerr believe that health inequalities might also be a useful basis for deciding how that money is spent in future.

I will indulge myself by putting one final, final point on the record. We talked about a concern that there might be a lack of co-ordination, and Mr Harris in particular has sought to reassure us on that. However, my understanding is that community planning partnerships have a statutory obligation to provide that co-ordination at a local level, based on 2007 legislation.

I am sorry to have had to squeeze all that in, but time is short and I want to put as much as possible on the record.

Mr Howie, do you have a view on the divvying up of cashback for communities money?

John Howie: It is fantastic to be given the authority, even just for a few seconds. This goes back to the criteria for funding allocations based on need. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that certain populations will benefit from additional investment. That was certainly the case in a keep well programme that I was involved in, which put dedicated resources into the 20 per cent most deprived areas for the purposes of primary prevention through primary care. The same rules apply to other funding allocations and there is considerable merit in that.

Local decisions will be made on allocations, but other drivers will determine which local organisations get funding. There is always a national role in defining the criteria for where money should go for specific populations, based on need.

Stewart Harris: I want to reassure Bob Doris that our strategy for sport and recreation in Scotland is not short term; it goes way beyond the Commonwealth games. We are putting a system in place for performance and community sport that will enable us to achieve the ambitions that we and everyone around this table are striving for—it is not about a cliff edge at 2014. We want to

continue all the good work that we are doing and we want Scotland to be ambitious.

The Convener: Before you leave, I will ask you what you expect out of this inquiry—I give you notice of that.

VOCAL—the association for culture and leisure managers in Scotland—says that it agrees with what we have heard about access to children's play areas and maximising access to the school estate, but believes that there is a longer-term issue about maintaining the resources that we have, which have been developed through initiatives such as PPP and the Commonwealth games. VOCAL refers particularly to "The Ticking Time Bomb" report on swimming facilities. Given things such as the change in the nature of ownership, with arm's-length organisations, and reducing pots of money, are you concerned about how community assets can be maintained? How can we and should we do that?

Stewart Harris: There is no doubt that it will take a lot of commitment to maintain and further develop the facilities stock. In our discussions with local government, it still has a huge commitment to doing that, but there are financial pressures and we must consider and respect what local authorities do around making decisions on priorities. As a national agency, we certainly stand ready to look at any ways in which we can help to make the facilities stock more effective, whether through influencing or funding. Those conversations will go on.

Lee Cousins: One important thing about facilities is that their quality has a direct impact on participation. A poor-quality facility will turn off participation, without a doubt. There is a job to be done in balancing investing in more facilities and maintaining the quality of existing facilities. In an era of restricted resources, we must look harder at whether we have got the right balance between maintaining the quality of our existing facilities and adding new ones.

Mary Allison: I have a small comment on that. One of the biggest studies on effective community sport intervention showed that a critical factor is communities using every bit of their estate. Notwithstanding engaging with the pressures on and challenges for local authorities' sports facilities—which we need to and will do—potentially, there is a lot of resource in communities that is perhaps underused or underutilised.

We are looking at the whole outdoor and adventure sport agenda. Scotland has one of the most fantastic sets of ready-made natural resources for sport and we think that there is a lot more value for us in that in terms of being able to drive up participation through some of those

channels. It is also about recognising some of the financial realities and bringing imagination and creativity to the re-use and expansion of facilities that have perhaps not been in our sights in the past.

The Convener: That concludes the committee's questions. If panel members wish to take the opportunity to put on the record any important issues that they feel have not been covered or which they want to emphasise and which the committee should look at, they should feel free to do so. If they do not feel like doing that now, they can always communicate with the committee after reflection, following the session—we would welcome that, too.

Lee Cousins: All our experience in developing sport tells us that it comes down to the individual—to the committed individual who has a bee in his bonnet about wanting to achieve something and to individuals who get together for an interaction that creates communal energy. All the quality examples—even clubs such as Inch Park, which was driven by a couple of individuals—show that when such individuals get to work and interact with each other, the energy and the growth in participation come. That applies particularly in some deprived areas and in some areas that we might think of as being less sporty.

Lining up national strategies is one thing, but I would like the committee to understand that, when local people get the energy, the concept and the idea, ensuring that they have the ability to find information, assistance and channels of working is as important as is getting hold of resources. The driver for community sport is from the bottom up and not necessarily from the top down.

Kim Atkinson: We have spoken a little about budgets. The sport budget is set only until 2014-15. I am conscious that the UK Government has extended its budget for performance sport beyond that, to Rio in 2016. What we said about strategies and short-term planning is also true of that. I am sure that an opportunity exists there, particularly when we think of the legacy from the Commonwealth games.

We must not lose sight of the fundamental fact that sport is fun. Whether people are participating or volunteering, fun is at the heart of it all. We talk about funding, strategies and everything else, but sport is fun, and fun must remain at the heart of it.

The inquiry provides an opportunity to recognise, promote and—I hope—ensure that more people understand the value of sport to communities and the additional value that clubs create in communities. Whether that relates to enjoyment, participation or preventative spend, sport and sports clubs provide additional value in communities.

There are opportunities for increased partnership working and sharing of best practice, which we have mentioned. That is a great opportunity for an outcome.

We must look at a legacy beyond where we are. By legacy, I selfishly mean a legacy for sport. I appreciate that the 2014 Commonwealth games will have a lot of legacies, but our members are particularly interested in having a legacy for sport, as well as all the other legacies. We have spoken about physically literate children and employer-supported volunteering.

We have opportunities to make partnerships with health services, of which we have heard great examples. When the committee takes evidence from the minister, the chief medical officer and Dr Andrew Murray, they will have different examples. There is a new opportunity. We have talked about people who are excluded in one way or another or who have poorer health. There are more opportunities in relation to that, and I am sure that an exciting opportunity will arise.

Stewart Harris: I have appreciated the balance of the committee's discussion between the strategic approach and commitment and the specific interventions and programmes. That is welcome, because the strategic approach is often forgotten. If that continues, I will thank you.

The Convener: I thank you all for your time, participation and evidence.

I suspend the meeting to allow new people to come round the table.

11:29

Meeting suspended.

11:35

On resuming—

The Convener: We move to our second panel of witnesses. I warmly welcome Stuart Younie, service manager for sport and active recreation with Perth and Kinross Council and a member of the national executive committee of VOCAL—the association for culture and leisure managers in Scotland; Andrew Bain, chief executive of Active Stirling and chairman of Sporta Scotland; Oliver Barsby, chief operating officer with the Scottish Association of Local Sports Councils; Steven Percy, community sport hub development officer with East Renfrewshire Council; Willie Young, community and sport lead manager with Argyll and Bute Council; and Daryl McKenzie, community sport hubs officer with Leisure and Culture Dundee. I thank you all for attending. We are running half an hour behind, which is not unusual and perhaps predictable. We hope that we can

have some discussion between the witnesses, rather than just formal questions from members.

A lot has been said this morning about where the money lies. We have heard that 90 per cent of the responsibility, the statutory obligations and the community planning responsibility comes down to local activity. Do you agree? I see Willie Young shaking his head, so he is first up.

Willie Young (Argyll and Bute Council): I fell for that one.

The myth that 90 per cent of expenditure on sport goes to local authorities should be dispelled. The vast majority of the money pays for facilities, the staff who run those facilities and the infrastructure. On the sports development side, which we are involved in, we are basically the poor relations. There is no statutory obligation on local authorities to provide for sports development, other than at an “adequate” level—that is the wording in the legislation. I cannot remember off the top of my head what year the act is from, but it is from way back, and the interpretation of it varies across the country.

Andrew Bain (Active Stirling and Sporta Scotland): Willie Young’s comment that a large proportion of spend goes on direct facility management is relevant. Complex buildings such as ice rinks and swimming pools cost a lot of money to run. Health and safety legislation means that we need a lot of staff to run them. However, that is, we hope, money well spent on further developing sport, because it gives a safe, friendly and positive environment for clubs and for recreational activity and to which young people can come and enjoy physical activity, which, we hope, will lead to a lifetime of keeping active and to the health and wellbeing that come from that.

As Willie Young says, on paper, 90 per cent of the resource goes to local provision. The members of Sporta—the leisure trusts that run facilities and contract services for sports development and active schools on behalf of local authorities—would love to be able to put more direct spend into things such as community sport initiatives and sports development programmes to embed that lifelong learning.

Stuart Younie (VOCAL): I perhaps sit somewhere in the middle of my two colleagues, but they are absolutely right. From a VOCAL perspective, the real question is how we will spend that 90 per cent going forward, particularly as we enter the difficult financial times that lie ahead.

Looking in particular—as the inquiry is—as community sport, we see that the issue is how we use investment to support community sport, whether through the provision of facilities and hard assets and access to them, or other support, and I welcomed the earlier discussion about volunteers

and voluntary organisations and how we are helping to build capacity in communities. The spend and the responsibilities that local authorities have are two distinct issues. That is a useful perspective to have as discussions progress.

The Convener: We are all well aware of the arm’s-length organisations that provide services for local authorities. The VOCAL submission supports the trend towards community self-management options such as leasing facilities. However, that would take management further away. Would a leasing arrangement by a sports club raise concerns with the local authority in relation to its assets?

Willie Young: In Argyll and Bute, we have community involvement in the management of our facilities. We have one facility in Oban, Atlantis Leisure, and I understand that you are meeting representatives from that organisation tonight. It has been a community enterprise—what is now termed a social enterprise—since 1991. The council’s partnership with Atlantis Leisure is a successful one. It has leased the building from the council since 1981 and we pay it a subsidy. It is similar to an arm’s-length organisation, but it is not the arm’s-length model that you see across Scotland in which the local authority has control through councillors sitting on the boards, for example; it is a completely community-run facility with some council money put in. We have another two facilities in Argyll and Bute that are smaller and completely community-built, led and run, and we give a grant towards their operation.

Those are three successful examples of community involvement and a community drive to get facilities that the council would not have provided otherwise.

Daryl McKenzie (Leisure and Culture Dundee): To touch on what has been said, we are probably in a similar position in Dundee, although we are probably 20 years behind what Atlantis Leisure is doing.

We have three specific community sport hubs that have utilised a council-run building and its changing-room facilities and meeting room for the best part of the past 20 to 25 years. During that time, the hubs have put in money to the council—it may be weekly income or monthly subscriptions—but the facilities have got worse and worse through general wear and tear and the council has not maintained them to a specific standard or to the standard expected by the young people of today.

The community sport hubs that I work with are entering into discussions with the local authority, looking at an agenda similar to that of Atlantis Leisure. They would take on a long-term lease or ownership of the facilities and every pound that is

put back from the community would go towards bettering the facility. That is a model that we should be pushing.

In Dundee, we are taking a great interest in the debate about social enterprise and we are looking to roll that model out among sports clubs. The people I talk to from Senscot, the Scottish Government and sportscotland are saying that most sports clubs in Scotland are community or social enterprises, because they take money and provide a service, for example football, rugby or basketball training, and put that money back into sport, which they do in whatever way their community tells them to—whether that is for a fundraiser, an annual trip to a competition or a festival or new sports kit. Whatever it is, their community tells them what they want their money spent on and the money goes back in.

The model used by Atlantis Leisure is one to be favoured; it is certainly one that we are looking to roll out in Dundee.

11:45

Andrew Bain: Members will not be surprised that I want to come in on that point. Traditionally, Sporta members tend to follow the social enterprise model, which Willie Young talked about—indeed, many members have social enterprise mark status. We are all independent of the local authorities and have specific management contracts. Boards have local authority representation, to represent the investment that the authorities make, but the companies run as independent organisations, with volunteer boards. For example, in my organisation we have a board of 13 directors: five are council appointments; the rest are drawn from local business community and sportspeople, including ClubSport Stirling, which is our local sports association. The board decides the policy, based on the contract arrangements with the local authority.

There is ground to be made by moving more towards such a model, which enables local authorities to continue to dictate the strategic priorities. That takes me back to what Stewart Harris said. If the national strategic framework is correct and there is a clear request to local authorities to deliver, that can be passed down through the contracts for any social enterprise, whether it is an individual club, a community environment such as Atlantis Leisure or a more formal cultural and leisure trust such as Glasgow life or South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture. The protection should come from proper contract documentation and partnership working to deliver on shared objectives, with the organisation being a key member of the community planning partnership. That is when all the strategic areas

start to come together and, I hope, the benefits of sport and physical activity can be delivered in a cost-efficient way.

Stuart Younie: I agree with Andy Bain. Correct me if I am wrong, convener, but I think that you were suggesting that there can be tension when facilities that have traditionally been run by a local authority are leased to community organisations. Local authorities are certainly starting to look more seriously at such an approach.

On provision and asset management, we have a mixed economy. Some facilities have been owned and managed by local clubs for years—hundreds of years, in some cases. Some new facilities are coming on stream that are owned and managed by local authorities or leisure trusts. There is a mixed picture, and there are moves to develop community sports clubs and increase the use of the school estate.

There are many great examples of arrangements that are better meeting communities' needs. Such work needs to be driven locally, through a strategic approach. It might be better that a local trust, rather than the local authority, owns and manages a facility; equally, it might be for a local community club or organisation to take on that role. We need to look at the mixed economy and take a strategic approach to considering what is in the best interests of communities, whether that is clubs or a more commercial approach to sport and leisure provision, so that we get the right mix and balance of facility, whether leisure facilities are part of the school estate, club owned and run or independent.

Steven Percy (East Renfrewshire Council): I agree. Local authorities are looking to offload—for want of a better word—community facilities to social enterprises or local voluntary community clubs, due to budget constraints. There are good examples of community clubs and social enterprises. It comes back to the people involved. There has to be due process, whereby a planning group, for example, considers which facilities are best for certain groups or clubs. Investment is needed if that is to happen. A lot of the facilities that we are talking about are just pavilions or community halls, which provide a social base for a club, but people really need access to higher-quality facilities, which might still be owned by the local authorities—I am thinking about games halls or third-generation football pitches, which are potentially substantial assets.

Oliver Barsby (Scottish Association of Local Sports Councils): Sometimes when facilities move away from local authority management there can be extreme variations in price and people do not know where to go to find out what is available. Do they go through the school, the leisure trust or the local authority? We need some way of

collating all that information, so that there is greater consistency. There should be a consistent approach to cost, too. A leisure trust and a local council might charge different prices for using a pitch.

We need to ensure that the information is clear. Sometimes the barrier is not that the facilities are not there, but that the community does not know where to go to find the information or it is not very clear.

Richard Lyle: To return to a point that I made in the previous session—most of you were sitting in the gallery—we have sports councils, local authorities and sportscotland, so there are a lot of different authorities. How can we best do things locally? In previous years, councils offloaded facilities to trusts or whatever. Some worked and increased their membership, and some did not work.

Local people are concerned that you are taking all those facilities out of what they believe to be their control. I know that that has worked well in places such as Perth, Dundee and—I have to say—North Lanarkshire.

What is your view on the development of community sport hubs? What opportunities exist to pull all the existing authorities together in order to promote sport in Scotland?

Daryl McKenzie: Obviously the fact that I applied for the job and am now sitting here means that I am a firm believer in the benefits of community sport hubs. Having been in the job for the past 14 or 15 months, I have seen some key case studies and projects that show how the hubs can work.

I agree 100 per cent with what you are saying. If we give official status or an asset to a group, a body, a charity or a community sports club, some members of the public may view that as taking it away from the local authority so that a public body will not have the opportunity to support it.

The key is—as we have tried to do heavily in our community sport hubs in Dundee—to go out and engage with the community. We need to ensure that we get the community leaders on the board so that the facilities are open to all.

There should not be a stigma. Once a community sports club takes ownership over a pavilion, a piece of land or a training pitch, it is not ring fenced for that club, but open to the wider community. Partnership working between the NHS, schools, the local authority, sports development and all the people who are involved in the sport sector is important in that regard. They must understand that even though a facility is now owned by Dundee East Community Sports Club rather than Dundee City Council, it is still open to

all and is available and accessible, and that if people take part in that facility, they are putting resources back into their community.

That is the key stumbling block: we need to identify the leaders and ensure that that message is out there in the community.

As I said, I have been in this job for 14 or 15 months now, and I still meet people in the sports sector who say to me, “What is a community sport hub?” We must take on the job locally and nationally of ensuring that people are aware of the message and what we are trying to change.

Gil Paterson: That is really interesting. Can you tell us, from your experience, about the impact of what is happening on the ground? What is the difference now that we have the sport hubs?

Daryl McKenzie: I was briefly involved with voluntary community sports clubs through my job in sports development before I took on the role of community sport hub officer. To paint you a picture, there is a small community called Broughty Ferry on the east side of Dundee that has probably the best part of 13 or 14 good voluntary sports clubs. We were working through our club Dundee programme to develop and nurture them so that they could come up with ambitions, dreams, visions and aims for where they wanted to go.

In the community sport hub, we have managed to set up something similar. We have 14 or 15 of those clubs round the table to discuss general issues such as partnerships with local authorities, what and where they would like facilities to be, access to schools and access to external funding. We have set up a round-table approach and those guys are meeting regularly. There is no commitment—they have not signed a contract to say that they will provide that input for a certain period of time—but as long as that approach fits their needs and benefits each individual sports club, they continue to attend the meetings to discuss local needs and how they could do things better.

In a sports club—as anyone who is involved in one will know—it is difficult to find five or six people who have a dream and a vision to work together. We tend to find that each individual sports club will have one or two people who basically run the club and deal with the coaching, the parents, the facilities, the equipment, the long-term vision and the budget.

The community sport hubs give us an opportunity to put six or seven of those people who are dealing with six or seven clubs in the same room and say to them that they are dealing with the same schools, partners, local members of Parliament, sports development section and facilities and they are competing against the same

local facility. We ask them whether we can all work together to solve those generic issues—they may be different in each community, but they are the same in terms of the nuts and bolts of what they are trying to do.

Gil Paterson: I get a picture of the organisation. What is the impact on the punters—the people who use the service? Has the service improved or is it the same?

Daryl McKenzie: To paint another picture of the community sports club in question, Dundee East, it started off as a football community sports club that grouped together five individual football clubs—it was purely football based. In the past year, we have managed to add another local sports club that deals with rugby, cricket, table tennis, tennis and badminton and we have just added a handball club and a local tennishinkan karate club.

Two or three years ago, the focus was on football for Dundee East. Of the five football clubs involved, one was a junior football club, another was an amateur club for adults and the other three were Scottish Football Association quality mark youth accreditation scheme clubs, so there were pathways.

Five years ago, each of those five clubs, although they were based on the east side of the city, was travelling to and fro all over Dundee to use decent facilities—some of them were going to the west side of the city to book a hall from 6pm to 8pm on a Monday night, others were going to the east side and some of them were going to the centre—they were quite scattered around. That made it quite difficult to promote a sense of community ownership. By coming together as a football club initially, the five clubs created a bit of a vision and a bit of a facilities strategy. They wanted to go out and gain external funding to build their own training pitch, which they could all utilise.

About three or four months ago, we managed to get that project up and off the ground and, after about 12 weeks, we now have a 60m by 40m outdoor third-generation Astroturf floodlit facility right in the heart of the Dundee East community. Although it is not just for the guys involved in the Dundee East club, about 85 per cent of the bookings are for its five community clubs, so regular punters who were travelling all over Dundee to take part in a community club that is situated in the east of the city now have to travel a maximum of 2 or 3 miles. The use of the facility goes backwards and forwards between the teams, so there is an under-13s team playing from 6pm to 7pm, an under-14s team playing from 7pm to 8pm, an under-15s team playing from 8pm to 9pm and so on. That helps with the pathway and it helps to get that real sense of community ownership.

The club now feels that, although it may not have solved football in the area for the next 50 years, it has taken care of football a little bit, so now it can develop its facilities strategy to concentrate on the other strands of the club and work out how to increase their facilities so that they have a similar programme around the community club, if that makes sense.

Gil Paterson: Yes, it certainly makes sense.

Oliver Barsby: I fully support what Daryl McKenzie was saying. A lot of the earlier evidence session was focused on the importance of sharing facilities and the facilities side of things. However, the other benefits of community sport hubs are—as Daryl emphasised—the local strategic importance of sharing resources by bringing the volunteers together. If there are six or seven key volunteers, it helps them to share the job so that they can use their energy most effectively.

Rather than having to make contact with six or seven clubs separately, other local groups such as active schools can use one central contact at the community sport hub. That creates a much better joined-up approach—not simply for active schools, but for any school with a community group. It is not just sharing facilities that is key to the community sport hubs.

Steven Percy: My role is similar to Daryl's. It is important to stress the flexibility that community sport hubs can have. East Renfrewshire has a very successful and well-established programme of community development centres with council-run classes. The downside with the classes is that they are often delivered just to people between the ages of five and 18. There is often a drop-off before the age of 18 and we often find that the classes do not lead anywhere. The class is a good activity and it develops skills, but it does not link very well with anything else.

I firmly believe that it is better to work with clubs, because they can link with the governing bodies and they can link to competitions. Working with clubs is flexible and also performance orientated—or ability orientated. That means that if someone wants to do a foundation-level activity, they can do it within the community sport hub. If they are a particularly talented performer who wishes to go for a regional or a national trial, we can link with the governing body by putting them in touch with it or getting information on how to go for a trial.

As well as that, the community sport hubs want to link with other organisations—for example the housing or health sectors—to create programmes that can tackle potential outcomes on health boards or housing associations. Universities, if they are available, can be used as a source of volunteers or to get people with expertise into an organisation. Another example is the police—we

spoke a little bit about cashback for communities. It may be possible that, apart from their normal bread-and-butter activities, clubs can create other activities and link with community safety partnerships to try to reduce crime in an area. When that is done by the community for the community instead of being delivered by another agency or an arm's-length agency, there is more buy-in by the community because of that shared value.

12:00

Willie Young: That is music to my ears. Someone asked earlier how many community sport hubs are being built or how many buildings will host community sport hubs. In my view, community sport hubs are not about buildings—if they are, I am in the wrong job and I have been doing the wrong thing for the past year with regard to community sport hubs. They are about people and about what we have been discussing. I agree completely with Daryl McKenzie and the other speakers. It is a question of how we help people to become more confident in what they are doing. Many of these people are volunteers and they are doing their own thing. Probably most if not all of their time is spent trying to put a team on the park on a Saturday afternoon, scrambling around for enough people or getting someone to take the junior section on a Tuesday night because the dad who was to take them cannot do so because he is working late. It is all about people and about instilling confidence in the people who are running these things, to show them that they are not alone and that if they share their ambitions and the work, they can achieve so much more.

Across the board and from top to bottom in sport, we are all guilty of allowing those people to flounder and do their own thing without co-ordination. The funding of community sport hubs allows local authorities to spend more time resourcing and helping those people to realise what they can do together and thereby achieve so much more. That is the important point.

Stuart Younie: I agree completely. You will hear from Daryl McKenzie and Steven Percy that their work in their roles is critical. The great benefit that will result from investment in community sport hubs is the bringing together of the people and the places agendas, which are a couple of the key themes that are being examined by the committee. Local people are being brought together in local organisations. Fundamental to that is the support that we offer through local authorities or leisure trusts to build capacity and to create those connections and networks.

Richard Lyle asked about the benefit of community sport hubs. VOCAL sees this as an opportunity to bring together some of the issues

and to be far more responsive to communities with regard to the types of facilities we provide, the types of access arrangements we have in place and the types of support we provide for those organisations. That is critical, because if these hubs are going to work, they need strong organisations and strong people behind them. Notoriously, there are often, as Daryl said, one or two key individuals involved. We need to ensure that there is succession planning within an organisation or a club and an infrastructure behind them as volunteers to support their work. This is fundamental. Having people such as Daryl and Steven and others working in the sports development profession supporting local clubs and organisations is critical to the success of community sport hubs and to the development of clubs and local organisations.

The Convener: That is helpful.

Drew Smith: I understand Willie Young's point about community sport hubs not being buildings. My issue was to do with whether we are being equitable in how we are spending on resources across the country. I am not bothered whether a hub is the Sir Chris Hoy velodrome or whether it is a network of people being supported to do something. That is not my interest.

My question to the delegates is about the numbers game and the objectives for the expenditure of public money. Is it fair to ask you to do the work on harder community sport, which is what is being discussed here? It is the issue of engaging, supporting and encouraging people who are involved in competitive sport or who could be encouraged to become involved to improve, with all the accompanying advantages, versus the separate issue of the level of physical activity in the country and dealing with those groups that are more difficult to reach and who will not, perhaps, become involved in these hubs to the same extent. Is it reasonable for us to say that you have to do both those things, or is there any value in separating them?

Moreover, what does the fact that we are taking evidence on community sport from an all-male panel tell us? Does it tell us something about how we sought you out or something about the network that we are creating in communities? What is your impression of what you are being asked to measure and how you have been asked to report back on your work? Are people like us at the national level saying, "And we also want you to tell us about physical activity and we want you involve more people," and to measure things that, frankly, you will be unable to get into in the way that we are asking?

The Convener: Andrew Bain is making a bid for that question.

Daryl McKenzie: Good.

Andrew Bain: From my—and my colleagues'—perspective, it is reasonable to ask us to do both things, but the key to projects such as community sport hubs is improved communication and partnership working. After all, we cannot do this on our own. Although a leisure trust can be a key provider of certain elements, it will not successfully deliver the full pathway of sport or pathway of physical activity and we need the support of governing bodies, local communities, local authorities and so on. The community sport hub project provides a real chance to improve communication and avoid duplication. What happens is that various partners, particularly those in more rural and widely spread communities, end up doing the same things when, if we came together to share resources and learning experiences, we would have a much stronger end-product and would, I hope, be able to spread the benefits more widely.

We need a double-strand pathway. In sport, we focus a lot on the performance pathway and on getting the next Chris Hoy or gold-medal winner. Of course, that is vital, but we must focus on ensuring that, say, my eight-year-old daughter will, when she is 18, still think it important from a health point of view to go to the pool or the gym or to use her bike instead of getting in a car or jumping on a bus. We also need to look at how these things interlink, because we can sometimes be overprescriptive about when we might hit a performance pathway or go on to a physical activity pathway. Given that we all mature, reach our peaks or get interested in things at different times, we need a partnership approach that allows people to jump from one side to the other. After the fantastic Olympic games—and with the fantastic Paralympic games that are on at the moment—people are starting to ask, “How do these guys train?” Indeed, that has been one of the biggest motivators we have seen. When Andy Murray tweeted his 400m split time compared with Mo Farah's, it suddenly got the online community interested and made people wonder what their own 400m time might be and made them want to emulate those sports stars. It is not about someone trying to be a gold-medal tennis player or 10,000m athlete, but it is vital that we capture the motivation that performance sport can give to physical activity.

Willie Young: As I see it, community sport hubs have been established because we have realised that there is a massive gap in the middle. Performance sport has been done and is sorted—although the people involved in it might argue otherwise—and active schools do a great job in the transition from school to community sport, but there is still a big gap. Where is the support for community clubs or for those who are not actively

engaged in competition? In a rural area such as Argyll and Bute, competition is really quite difficult. It is difficult to find someone to play against in the first place and, even if you find someone, you will still have to travel for inter-area games or, more likely, go to Glasgow, Paisley or wherever in order to play competitively.

As a result, our emphasis is more on getting people active. We have five key aims for community sport hubs—please do not ask me to name them all—the first of which is to get people more active, not to get them into competitive sport. Other aims cover improvements in the quality of coaching and volunteering and facilities. It is not duplicating anything that is being done anywhere else; it is filling a massive void in the middle that needs some resource put into it.

Stuart Younie: Going back to Drew Smith's original point, is it fair to ask these community sport hubs to deliver very targeted interventions with particular groups or to report back on specific measures in relation to those? It is absolutely fair that we are asked to do that, as we are spending public money and we want to ensure that we are demonstrating the impact of that money at a local level. It is a question of having the right mix of people and organisations around the table at the community sport hubs. A club is there to respond to the needs of its members—people join the club to be a part of it and want it to deliver what its membership wants—and it may not be realistic to ask some clubs and organisations to address some of these areas. Perhaps that cannot be achieved. On the other hand, other clubs will be well placed to meet a wider agenda.

In the context of community sport hubs, in bringing a number of partner organisations together it is necessary to be absolutely clear who plays what role and who will address which part of the overall package of services that are going to be offered. It may be more appropriate for a leisure trust provider, a local authority or another organisation such as a health body to look at specific interventions for particular targeted groups—for example, the active schools network has a focus on women and girls at the moment. Community sport hubs have the opportunity to bring together a range of local partners to agree their roles, what they can bring to the table and their immediate priorities so that they can agree on shared outcomes—fundamentally, that is what it comes down to—that deliver on the overall national agenda at a local level.

Daryl McKenzie: I will follow on from Stuart Younie's point and try to answer Drew Smith's initial question. It is very difficult for us to take a small band of maybe eight to 10 volunteers and tell them that we want them to do everything from what the active schools network has been doing to

what sports development officers, local authorities, regional partnerships, national governing bodies and so on are doing. If we did that, we would scare them all away and we would not be sitting here in a year's time. That is a tricky thing to face.

For the majority of the time, although Steven Percy and I are not committee members, the volunteers see us very much as part of their committee and as the people who help them with the generic tasks. That is a difficult thing to do, and it is key to what Stuart Younie said. We must be clever in how we strategically position our partners, of which the active schools network is a key one. When we sit down with a roomful of volunteers to explain a potential early intervention programme—for example, a physical literacy programme that the NHS is trying to introduce for three to five-year-olds—if we were to pass that on to a community club, it would not have a clue how to deal with that. Those guys are volunteers and we have to upskill them gradually, over time.

That is where the link to local partners such as the NHS, the active schools network, sports development officers and the national governing bodies becomes key. When a club is at a specific position on the timeline, we link it to a local agency that has the expertise and knowledge, which comes in and delivers 70 to 80 per cent of the programme for it but brings the committee along for the other 20 to 25 per cent, meaning that they get to that shared outcome or aim of having three to five-year-olds taking part in the club. Although the club does only 20 to 25 per cent of that, with the national governing body doing the rest, that achieves the same aim of having more three to five-year-olds taking part in the club.

That follows on into active schools. If a club needs a local facility or a specific link into its local school, we put it in communication with the active schools co-ordinator, who takes it through a similar process. When it comes to club accreditation, we may go back to the national governing body. When it comes to local strategic planning—we have talked about the community planning partnerships being key to all this—we come in and ask to set up a meeting to discuss the situation with our local community officers, so that we can look at the impact that we can make by taking over that pavilion or piece of land and turning it into a sustainable community building or facility.

It is impossible to place the responsibility for all that on the community sport hubs. Those guys and girls are working full-time and have families and other commitments. If we did that straight away, we would end up ruining the fantastic opportunity that we have. That is why it is important—certainly, in the initial stages—that we still have sports development officers, local governing

bodies, regional partnerships and sportscotland coming in with their expertise and knowledge at specific times. In that way, maybe in 10 or 15 years we will have 32 Atlantis Leisures with skilled businesspeople who are able to deliver the club from start to finish. That is not necessarily a goal that we can realistically achieve within five years, but we can take important steps towards achieving it so that, over the next 10 years, the clubs will naturally evolve.

It is certainly a key issue. I do not know whether Steven Percy has faced anything similar, but it is certainly something that I am aware of from being involved in week-to-week, month-to-month committee meetings and discussions.

12:15

Oliver Barsby: I endorse what Daryl McKenzie has said. It is important not to stifle volunteers' energy by asking them to do all the reporting. We need to strike the right balance. The sports councils, which have similar issues in relation to community sport hubs, are clear that they focus on community sport rather than performance sport. They support some performance athletes financially, but their focus is very much on getting people active in their local communities.

The problem with community sport as opposed to performance sport is that it is much more difficult to measure and it has much longer-term benefits or outcomes. We can look at participation figures, but if we are looking for data on the health benefits of sport, we are not going to get a strong response within just a couple of years. We need to look at the longer-term objectives. It is much more difficult to measure such things than it is to measure, say, the progress of athletes through talent programmes or the number of medals that are won at games, information on which comes in much more quickly.

It is easy to point the finger, but that message is also reinforced by the media, which tend to focus on what medals have been won locally and nationally by people in the local area, rather than on participation and programmes to make people more active.

The Convener: Some of the written evidence raises that issue. Some people claim that we need more research and measurement, but others have said that any amount of activity is good and we should just get on with it. We might have a chance to come back to that.

Bob Doris: This is a really interesting discussion. I want to double-check something with Daryl McKenzie. I think that he half answered the question when he mentioned the other community planning partners. We need to ensure that there is a formal process that is separate from the local

sports clubs. They might run a mile if we started talking about formal community planning partners and overall strategies, but we need to ensure that the strategy is in place and that it is filtered down to the local level, where there might be discussions with clubs or community sport hubs about whether they could offer more activities for young females or do something in a particular housing scheme where not much is going on. Is that a process that you go through?

I hate to come back to measurement, because it goes without saying that there will be positive outcomes if people live healthier lives, but how do we capture data on how many young people, how many females and how many young people from more deprived areas are participating in sport? If the committee or its successor committee has you or your successors round the table in, say, three years' time and asks how you have got on in that time, how will that data have been captured?

Daryl McKenzie: That is an interesting question and a difficult one to answer. In the community sport hubs in Dundee, we have a simple membership application form. It does not go through a committee or anything like that. It is almost like an application form to become a member of the community sports club. With one of our hubs in Dundee, in the Craigie area, anybody over the age of 16 can become an active member and anybody under the age of 16 who is taking part in activities that are delivered by the sports club becomes an associate member. Basically, their mum, dad, guardian or whoever signs the bit of paper giving details of where the young person lives, what activities they take part in, how regularly and so on. We do that on a year-by-year basis so that we can see whether the club has grown from, say, 2011 to 2012.

However, that can become quite muddy. For example, if we have three clubs in the community hub in 2011 and then another four clubs come on board, it will look as if we have more than doubled our participation rates, but all that we will have done is to bring another four clubs into the wider community sport hub. We stumbled across that after the first five or six months. It looked as though we were growing, but then we asked whether that was the case or whether we were just involving more partners.

I am working on the issue at the moment and will continue to do so over the next 12 to 18 months. It is important to have collective data about community sport hubs, but there has to be information about whether each individual club is growing and becoming stronger as a unit. Do they have more female members or female volunteers, and do they have more volunteers over the age of 65? Are they growing? It is up to the clubs to say, "Our target group will be girls this year, and we'll

try to measure that on a year-long basis." That is not easy because, as you said, there is a lot of monitoring that the clubs have to do. It is about us being quite cute in how we measure that and focus on the impact that can be made. There are ways of doing that. I understand your question, but it can become very difficult.

Stuart Younie: It is the eternal question of measuring impact and deciding what that impact looks like. Oliver Barsby alluded to the fact that some of the impacts can be much longer-term impacts around building capacity. It is not just about participation; it is about the growth of people and of those organisations.

I can comment on the approach that we have taken in Perth and Kinross, which I think is similar to the approach that has been taken in Dundee. There are 140 clubs and organisations that are registered with our local sports council, with a total membership of around 11,000. Within that, we are working with a much smaller and more defined group of clubs and organisations through our community sport hubs approach.

The monitoring that we are trying to do is much more bespoke, in that we are trying to capture data that is with those clubs that we are actively working with. That is similar to the approach that Daryl McKenzie was talking about and makes the process more manageable, which allows us to focus on specific areas, such as women and girls, driving up youth membership and disability sport. At the moment, we have a successful project on disability sport that we are running with Perth and Strathtay Harriers, with investment from the council, that is focused on something that the club wanted to do and has increased the club's engagement with disabled athletes. That is part of the issue; we need to respond to the needs and interests of the club and invest in them. We need to be responsive to the clubs, consider the interventions and the agenda and ask what role the clubs can play. We need to support the clubs to achieve what they want to achieve.

Dr Simpson: You said that there are 140 clubs with 11,000 members. That is very interesting. How many of those members are what we might call sporting members and how many are what we might call supporting members, in the way that I am a member of my rugby club? I have been a member for 40 years; previously I was an active participant, but now I only provide voluntary support as a doctor.

Stuart Younie: I do not have that figure to hand, but I can check that. However, you will find that that figure of 11,000 includes a mix of active members and social members across a range of sports.

Dr Simpson: That means that, in measuring activity levels, it is not enough to talk about membership of clubs.

The Convener: That begs the question: who would measure who is an active member and who is a social member?

Stuart Younie: The global statistic of club membership is an easy one to pluck out of the air, and it provides us with an interesting figure, but if we want to have a more meaningful figure, we need to think about having more targeted measurement. That is the approach that we are taking.

Steven Percy: Monitoring and evaluation are an integral part of what we are doing. Through the partnership with sportscotland, that is something that we will have to do, like it or not.

East Renfrewshire uses a club accreditation scheme to conduct monitoring and evaluation, which means that it is done more on an individual club basis rather than per hub. When a club joins our hub, we take a snapshot of its membership over three age ranges, as well as the number of male and female participants. We could dive down further. All the clubs have different types of membership—there are playing memberships; associate memberships, for people on the committee; and social memberships, if they provide a social service or a social building.

We do that every year, measuring the same criteria in order to measure the growth that has taken place. We need to be able to show that what we are doing is working. As Willie Young said, we are achieving those five sets of criteria, engaging with community leaders, growing the number of people who are participating and engaging and liaising with the right type of people. Ultimately, the membership of community organisations should go up, as well as the level of participation.

Willie Young: Monitoring, evaluation and the collection of statistics are difficult when we are working with clubs on a new concept under the community sport hub label. We are trying to nurture their trust in working with us and to get them to consider taking on additional challenges themselves. No club wants to be told that it is doing fine but needs to improve its membership numbers or become more competitive. We are in the early days with the burdens that we place on them, but there is a payback.

Our community sport hub is a rural area, not a location. It is mid-Argyll, which stretches from Inverary through Lochgilphead to Tarbert. I do not know what the square mileage is, but the linear mileage is more than 50 miles. The reason why we have chosen that to start with is simply that, although Lochgilphead high school is a central place to which everybody comes, we cannot use it

as a sport hub because not everybody has access to the building in the evenings. Although we cannot make the building the sport hub, we can make the communities and the people within them the sport hub.

We help clubs to fund people to go on coaching courses to improve the quality of their coaching and increase the number of people who can coach within those smaller communities. In return, we ask them to say how successful that has been and what the return is. Because we are talking about low population numbers, it is easier to gather that information, but we are conscious that, in the longer term, we must consider other measures for robust monitoring information.

One measure that we are considering is an accreditation scheme in which, if a club becomes accredited, it is obliged to provide numbers, as Steven Percy said. In Highland, there is a body called High Life Highland, which every family can become a member of in order to get concessions on the use of facilities across the board. That is a way of getting people to buy in.

There are ways of monitoring the use of services and facilities without it being too onerous. If we ask volunteers who are already hard pressed to undertake monitoring and evaluation, we must be careful that it is as meaningful to them as it is to us.

Bob Doris: I have found much of the conversation encouraging, mainly because I have been searching a long time to find examples of community planning working in practice. Your community sport hub seems to be an example of that happening in sports.

I understand that you do not want monitoring to be arduous or for people to think that it is a judgment on the success or otherwise of their club. If a club has 120 members and has had that number of members for the past 10 years, perhaps that is the nature of the club and it should not be seen as a criticism that it is still at that level of membership. However, more consistent, light touch monitoring would be favourable. Is there scope to standardise some of the data grab so that we can compare between local authorities and areas? Otherwise, we could have 32 different ways of collecting the information.

Willie Young: To be fair, community sport hubs are in an embryonic state. There has been discussion between all the community sport hub managers or officers and sportscotland. We had a meeting about two months ago to consider monitoring and evaluation. Sportscotland has taken a light touch on that matter. It does not want to invoke rules and regulations about what community sport hubs should be and how we manage them.

That is a good approach, but the providers on the ground and the providers of the funding recognise that there must be accountability within the initiative. That is evolving. We have had three national community sport hub meetings so far and, at each one, we could see a progression in the consideration of models. Someone somewhere within the organisation is thinking, "We must get this monitoring information in," but does not want to push too hard.

There must be scope to standardise. We cannot measure the success of anything unless we have a consistent way of measuring.

12:30

Oliver Barsby: I have two brief points. First, at some point, sportscotland considered a Scotland-wide accreditation scheme, which has been touched on. However, there was a feeling that it was better to deliver that locally, so sportscotland stepped away from introducing a national standardised scheme. We can argue that that has benefits and drawbacks.

A few sports councils deliver accreditation schemes and have had a strong response. That takes us back to the point that the reception of such a scheme depends on who delivers it. Clubs sometimes feel that they do not want to be forced to do something by the local authority, whereas there is more openness to accepting it if it comes from a sports council, which governs the clubs. The issue is not necessarily about the message, but about who delivers it and how—that is important, too.

Stuart Younie: Sportscotland is working with authorities to consider a national framework that can be applied across all 32 local authority areas to help with monitoring success. That work is still at its fairly early stages. To give a wee plug, at the VOCAL conference that is coming up at the end of October, one of the workshops will focus on that piece of work.

It is important to recognise that, although we want to get people physically active and although participation is an extremely important part of the preventative agenda on health, there is also value in recording the membership of clubs, whether social members, volunteers or coaches. The health and strength of our organisations gives an indication of the wellbeing in our communities. To reflect on the discussion a couple of minutes ago, although participation is obviously incredibly important, there is more to local sports clubs—there is the value that can be had from people being part of an extended family, a social network or a network of volunteering colleagues and from the employment opportunities and socialisation, particularly for older people.

Daryl McKenzie: Another area of monitoring and evaluation that we sometimes shy away from is to do with community engagement. It is easy for me to go back to a bit of paper that tells me how many participants, volunteers, coaches and committee members a club has, but I have lived through this job for the past 12 to 14 months and I have dealt with some community sport hubs that involve seven or eight clubs that meet once a month, or sometimes more, to sit round the table and discuss issues, topics and facilities. Whatever they discuss, that approach is to be commended. I have been involved in sports all my life and I have been in a voluntary sports club for the best part of four or five years. A snapshot of the situation four years ago would show that, for the majority of sports clubs in Scotland, if a club that played on the next pitch had asked to sit round a table to discuss generic facility issues or participation rates, they would have said, "Off you go. We'll deal with our club and you deal with yours. We're playing against you next Saturday in the league." As a nation, that was the culture five or six years ago.

One of the first questions that I am always asked when I speak to a club about potentially joining a community sport hub is, for example, "We're a swimming club and they're a basketball club—what if they steal our swimmers?" I say that the hub is not about that club wanting to take 30 swimmers and make them basketball players because they are fantastic athletes; it is about working together and saying that both clubs need more kids. It is about considering how to work together to develop programmes through which both clubs get more kids, better facilities and better links to local authorities. They will have more opportunities to sit down with local community planning officers and say that they do not want a new housing scheme; they want a new play park or indoor facility or whatever. The approach is about those clubs having the opportunity to go as one body—as a community sport hub—and say that they are not 30 people delivering football on a Saturday, but 800 people delivering 10 sports, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Those clubs can go to a school and ask to use its fantastic estate.

In my discussions with schools and other sports bodies, the first thing I am asked is, "Who are the community sports clubs?" When I get into the nuts and bolts and tell them about all the individual clubs that make up the community sport hub, the numbers of people that they deliver sports to every week and the ideas, strategy and vision that they have as one group, that is much more professional. It is certainly accepted more easily than if one club wants to develop football so that it can be the best and say, "We are the champions," at the end of the season.

That is a part of monitoring and evaluation that we sometimes do not take into consideration. We have to give that time to flourish. We cannot expect results in 12 months. We need people to build up the trust with other local clubs and local people. We need them to realise that they can trust their local MP and planning officer because they know what the clubs are trying to do and the benefits that they are trying to get. That might take 10 years or it might take three years—each community will be different. We have to take that part of monitoring and evaluation into consideration because it is crucial.

Nanette Milne: To some extent my question has been answered. Daryl McKenzie spoke about dealing with two or three enthusiastic volunteers, and others mentioned volunteers being under pressure. Clearly volunteers are crucial to sporting activity. Is there a direct role for sport hubs in actively recruiting volunteers and supporting them in their development, or is that a role for the individual clubs that are part of the hub? Have you come across any common barriers to volunteering in your work with sport hubs?

Steven Percy: I will describe our process in East Renfrewshire Council for recruiting volunteers. Through our active schools team and our sports development team, we normally get a host of inquiries over time. We plot in volunteer recruitment evenings, at which we tell people what they can expect when they volunteer and the return that we expect from them.

As well as giving people options for where they want to put their time and what is available, we do the more formal stuff, such as the protection of vulnerable groups check and deployment. I could see that sort of model being deployed within a community sport hub. Even if the active schools teams or the sports development teams were still to receive the inquiries, with the person's permission we could pass that information to a community sport hub, which could mimic the process I have just described. Potentially, we have a conveyor belt of volunteers, and we can describe our level of activity as well as offer those people opportunities to volunteer their time through—as Daryl McKenzie said—eight to 10 different sports on five to seven days of the week. There should be something available for everybody.

There are some national barriers to volunteering. One of those is the time that the PVG process takes—maybe rightly so, because of the questions that we are asking, and because we want people to be properly checked. People turn up to that initial meeting, or even e-mail us or get in touch three or four weeks before the recruitment evening, but it can be two or three months before their PVG check comes back. We speak about

people with enthusiasm and drive, but that can be lost over that length of time. The issue of time is one of the big barriers.

Andrew Bain: Volunteers are the lifeblood of community sport. Community sport hubs have a role because they bring together local needs and can help to deploy volunteers appropriately. However, we have to be wary of people saying, “Right, that’s the role of the community sport hub”, and no one else being engaged. Everybody has a role. Through our members, we have seen many more companies adopting formal volunteering policies to support their staff and other community members to get assistance and gain qualifications, whether it is first aid, child protection training or governing body courses.

Some companies allow staff paid leave or time off under special leave arrangements so that they can volunteer in major games. One of our duty officers is down at the Paralympics, helping out with the media team. We supported her to do that because it is a fantastic opportunity.

The key for me is that the community sport hub has a real chance of being a pool to bring all the local partners who have a role to play, whether they are from further education, schools, clubs, local authorities or facility providers. Everybody has a role.

We also have to share information. It is too easy to hide behind data protection—we say that we cannot share information, but if we all came together and worked with an open mind, we could find a way to share data safely and sensitively. We can find out, for example, that Andrew is volunteering here and also has an interest there, and can put the two together.

We have quite an interesting programme in Stirling, which has been running for a couple of years, in which we engage with the University of Stirling’s second-year sports students. Active Stirling takes them on board, recruits them, trains them, gives them governing body qualifications, gives them live experience of working in a sports development class or in a holiday programme with a local club under the supervision of one of our paid coaches, and deploys them to local clubs during the rest of their education. In addition, they are given paid-work opportunities, when appropriate. The more of those projects we can roll out and the more we can use the community sport hub as an exemplar of good practice and extend it to neighbouring local authority areas or wherever, the better.

Willie Young: The straight answer to the question about recruiting volunteers is that the community sport hubs and the clubs have a role to play, but I would still put the emphasis on the clubs, because they are the constituent members

of the hubs. We cannot lose that—the clubs cannot lose their identity. Some clubs are reluctant to become involved in community sport hubs because they feel that they might lose their identity.

In a rural or island authority such as Argyll and Bute, we are probably 99 to 100 per cent reliant on volunteers running, organising and developing sport. We help to resource that as much as possible. In my submission, I mentioned that every year—in February—we run a big coaching event called coaching champions. Over the past five years, it has grown to the extent that nearly 500 people come along to train in sport over a weekend. We do that because it is difficult to get a governing body to come into Argyll and Bute, as it is not possible to get a large enough core number of people in places such as Dunoon, Campbeltown or Oban, whereas if we bring people together and let them know that the course is on, the governing body will have confidence that it will take place, so it will come in and run it. Likewise, if people know that the course is to take place, they will come along. From a recruitment point of view, that means that new people can be sent along.

Succession planning is what we are talking about when it comes to volunteers. Clubs exist only if there are people to take part. Parents become involved in a club while their kids are involved in it and fall off at the other end when their kids move on, so it is important that succession planning takes place every year. That is what we have established over the past five years with the coaching champions process, which means that people do not have to go away to Glasgow or Edinburgh to train; they can get training on their doorstep.

In addition, we provide generic support as part of the coaching champions programme. We offer the Sports Coach UK courses in child protection training and safeguarding in children's sport, as well as training in first aid. There is another set of courses on running sport, on subjects such as how to be a good treasurer and how to run a meeting. We can provide a breadth of support, which it is up to communities, volunteers and clubs to take advantage of.

Stuart Younie: I echo what Andy Bain said. We should be careful not to see community sport hubs as the panacea for all our other problems. Volunteering is an issue right across sport. As Andy said, volunteers are the lifeblood of Scottish sport. My colleagues round the table will all recognise that.

We need to be careful, because although a lot of learning could come out of the work with community sport hubs, we are talking about a much bigger issue. Clubs offer huge potential for volunteers, but a lot of volunteering is done in

support of school activities, predominantly around active schools. Much of their remit is about recruiting and retaining volunteers to help support after-school and extracurricular activities. Many opportunities are available. We need to ensure that we have a system that identifies volunteers and slots them into the right positions, so that they are comfortable with what they are being asked to do and we are comfortable with them in terms of our expectations of what they can do.

I think that the barriers to volunteering are wide and varied, depending on the individual. The same is true of the motivations that inspire someone to volunteer. There are many different reasons why someone would want to get involved in sport. They might have been involved in sport themselves, their children might be involved in sport or they might have a sports connection through a family member or a friend, or through a club environment. Similarly, there are many different barriers, one of the biggest of which is time constraints. We all live in a frenzied world that moves at 100mph. I think that people are afraid to commit their time because they are worried about how much that will eat into their family time, in particular, or the time that they have to spend with friends, which they have to balance against work commitments. I take my hat off to all the volunteers across Scotland who give their time week in and week out to support sport. There is a massive investment of time in community sport, and this inquiry is important in recognising the role that the volunteers play and looking at how we can support them in future.

12:45

Oliver Barsby: Many issues around recruiting, training and the barriers to volunteering are generic and not specific to sport. Much of the discussion in this witness session and the previous session has been about the importance of partnerships. Those issues cut across the board and cannot be tackled by one particular sport; we have to tackle them together.

In one of my previous roles, about five or six years ago, I worked alongside coaching Edinburgh, which put on a lot of training courses. That was before community sport hubs came into being. Many of the training sessions were attended by not just one club or sport, but a number of sports. That was useful and it enriched the training process. It is important to emphasise working together and I hope that community sport hubs can take that a step further.

Daryl McKenzie: I will touch on something that I have discussed with like-minded people in Dundee. There seem to be two specific stigmas around volunteering in sport. The first is that someone who does not enjoy sport cannot

volunteer in sport. Many of our younger participants have mums and dads who have absolutely zero interest in sport but have a specific interest in their kid's wellbeing and enjoyment of their childhood. Community sport hubs give us the opportunity to engage with those parents, family members and other connected people and show them that a sports club is about much more than just sport. A volunteer in a community sport hub might never actually see the sport taking place or be at the training centre or the training sessions.

One thing that I have noticed while I have been involved during the past 12 to 14 months is that we are creating small businesses with these community sport hubs. Okay, sport is the product that they are delivering, but the community sport hubs are about so much more than just the hour and a half that the kids train on a Tuesday or a Thursday and the hour that they play on a Saturday, irrespective of their sport or competition. The hubs give us a bigger opportunity to engage with people. When I go to sport clubs, 90 per cent of the time I see parents sitting in their cars reading newspapers when their kids are 30 yards away training. That is because they have zero interest or expertise, or knowledge about how to take a session or how to engage with kids. Sometimes those parents who are sitting in their cars are businessmen, architects, lawyers, solicitors or financial advisers and the qualities and expertise that they could bring to the business, if that is what we are going to call the community sport hub, could be irreplaceable. They could be the difference between the community sport hub being there in 20 years' time or going back to five individual clubs using the same changing rooms without ever speaking to each other. Community sport hubs give us a real opportunity there.

The second stigma is around how a parent will volunteer until their kid falls off the other end. If we structure community sport hubs properly and have enough sports, organisations and pathways, a child could enter the sport hub at the age of three by taking part in a play scheme and they could continue until they are into their 30s or 40s and playing in an adult environment. If we structure the hubs even better, when they drop out of participation they could become members of a walking group, a jogging club, a yoga club, a keep-fit club, a zumba class, or whatever. We can set up the world so that my child could join the community sport hub at age three or four and still be there when they are 60 or 70, and it does not matter whether their participation is competitive or recreational. The community sport hubs give us the opportunity to do that.

I have been faced with many individual sport clubs that have a pool of fantastic volunteers driving the club forward, who suddenly say, "My

kid's 14 now. He doesn't like football. He wants to play the PlayStation and learn the guitar, so I have to take him to his guitar lesson on a Tuesday night and I can no longer volunteer at the club." That can mean that all the visions and exercises that we professional people draw up fall by the wayside. Community sport hubs give us the opportunity to say that the kid can still take part in the recreational side and be involved in the community, and still have the natural tie-in to what we are doing.

If those two stigmas cannot be resolved, the solutions to them can be developed through the community sport hub initiative or project if it continues to be developed.

The Convener: We have covered many of the issues that relate to our inquiry, and today's sessions have been helpful for building on the written evidence. It has been refreshing to hear about the strategic stuff that we spent a long time discussing in the first evidence session.

What I have taken from today's sessions is that enthusiasm and the benefit of local knowledge and experience are pretty important. If you feel that some issues have not been covered, or you want to make a brief comment about the outcomes that the committee should be seeking from its inquiry, please feel free to speak up now.

If you do not want to do so now, we encourage you to do so later. I hope that we can provide you with a link to the *Official Report* of the evidence. As a committee, we are trying to encourage the development of a live process: the evidence session should not be just something that you submit to, attend or whatever. We hope that you will continue to observe the evidence that we receive, and we would welcome your on-going input and any comments on the evidence that you have heard this morning. We are trying to keep the process as live as possible, so we encourage you to continue to participate in the inquiry, in which we all have a real interest.

Dr Simpson: We will be holding a specific debate in the chamber during the inquiry with the object of engaging other MSPs. If you have any comments, briefing notes or views that you feel should be emphasised in that debate, you can contact the individual members who represent your area. I represent Perth and Kinross, so perhaps I will get a note from Stuart Younie.

The Convener: Our witnesses wish to make a couple of points, after which we will finish the session.

Oliver Barsby: I have two quick points. First, much of the evidence today has been about the support that is available in and for sport, but witnesses have also mentioned the wider picture with regard to training needs and the importance

and recruitment of volunteers. The chairman of a sports club is the same as the chairman of an arts or music club in that their training needs are very similar. Of course, they need specific knowledge in their particular area, but we need to ensure that we are better at working together with the wider third sector and not just within sport to ensure that the resources can be better used.

Secondly, a lot of the emphasis today has been on community sport hubs. I know that the target is to have 150 community sport hubs by 2014. If there are, on average, around 10 sports clubs in a community sport hub, that is 1,500 clubs. In Scotland, we reckon that there are about 13,000 sports clubs, so we need to ensure that any resources that are focused on clubs are not focused only through the community sport hubs, because there is a wider community of clubs outwith that sector. We need to ensure that clubs can access any support that we provide even if they are not part of a community sport hub. We are still looking at that. I mean no disrespect to the community sport hubs as I think that they are a positive step forward, but a lot of clubs are not part of a hub yet and we need to ensure that we continue to support them.

Andrew Bain: We have focused on sport for obvious reasons, but it is important that we recognise other physical activity. There is a new style of club that should not be discounted—for example, gym membership and group fitness classes attract thousands of people to take up more activity.

We have heard examples from our members of people with depression who would not leave the house and people with a prescription drug dependency who are now engaged in health and fitness through gym membership. They are now reducing their drug dependency and their socialisation is improving. Perhaps the sports clubs need to be widened to cover physical activity clubs such as walking networks. We have all referred to those types of projects today.

Finally, I make a plea as someone who has come along to give evidence today. We would welcome support from local MSPs in putting pressure on their local authorities to keep sport—whether at a strategic or delivery level—at the forefront of their minds. Too often, it gets forgotten about. Sport is not a fully statutory provision, so when times are tough and budget decisions are being made we are sometimes the first area to go. Any support that we can gain from MSPs in the Parliament would be great; I am sure that it would be welcomed not only by our membership but by everyone else at the table.

Steven Percy: My first point is on education and the role that schools play in community sport hubs or sport provision in the community. We have

spoken a lot about partnership working and how we can join up the dots and work together to ensure that people follow pathways and are retained in sport. I notice in the education system the flexibility—which is probably right—for primary and secondary schools through things such as the curriculum for excellence. However, one thing that could lend itself tremendously to the throughput of people into sports clubs or to getting people to be more physically active outside school time relates to how often teachers—predominantly PE teachers—choose to teach sports that are not necessarily available in the community.

For example, basketball is delivered in many schools, but how many basketball clubs are available in communities? The answer is probably very few. I would like the national agenda to encourage teachers to go out and seek advice or support from community clubs and to deliver those sports in their schools, so that, if people are interested in what they do in physical education—in the two hours that we encourage to be provided—they can do that sport in the community afterwards.

I have spoken a lot about higher-end facilities, such as sports halls and sports centres, and about how sports clubs can influence and use such space. It is obvious that the space that is available is often oversubscribed by sports clubs, casual users, the Boys Brigade and church groups. Everybody out there is looking for the same space. It would be good to provide national encouragement by saying that, as such groups, community sport hubs or whatever sit closest to our role and outcomes and could achieve goals on our agenda, preferential access to local facilities should be provided.

We could say that some organisations should have a greater share, because they can achieve more with what is available. That would remove barriers for groups. For example, it is fine if people play fives in a casual five-a-side group and it is great that they are physically active, but the space that they use in an hour could be used by a women and girls' netball group that fits the national agenda, has links with the governing body, can make progress and could have links with performance pathways. The difference in the benefits of such groups can be enormous, but local authorities sometimes see no difference—booking is first come, first served.

Stuart Younie: On VOCAL's behalf, I thank the committee for inviting us to talk about community sport, to which we are all committed and in which we are involved day to day. It is great to hear the discussion, which will be followed through in the next couple of months.

This piece of work could have links to issues that VOCAL is considering, such as the review of

community planning partnerships that is going on at a local level. I return to Andy Bain's point about the importance of using the opportunity to ensure that sport, active recreation and physical activity do not fall through the cracks in that review. We must have leadership in senior management in local authorities and leisure trusts and among local elected members. The breadth of portfolios presents a challenge for having local champions who can lead and advocate on behalf of sport, active recreation and community sport.

Another issue is the link to the community empowerment and renewal bill and the potential for community self-management. The committee might want to consider that; VOCAL is looking at the subject and we might discuss it further. There is a lot of potential to make links to aspects of that bill.

Willie Young: I will try my best to be brief. The committee has not covered in detail outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and outdoor activity. There is concern that the number of outdoor centres that are run by education services or local authority services is shrinking, which affects young people's exposure to safe and responsible use of the outdoors.

Argyll and Bute has Stramash Social Enterprise—another social enterprise—which came from a local authority background and became a free-standing social enterprise. It promotes responsible use of the outdoors. I do not know whether the committee will take evidence from anyone from the outdoor sector, which is important, especially in a country such as ours, which has numerous opportunities in the outdoors.

The Convener: I thank you all for your participation and your valuable evidence. I hope that you will find the time to follow the inquiry and continue to contribute to it.

13:00

Meeting suspended.

13:01

On resuming—

The Convener: We come to agenda item 3. The committee will recall that we agreed the evidence programme for our community sport inquiry at the business planning day in Glasgow. This is our first opportunity formally to sign off the programme. We have copies of the relevant paper in front of us and I am happy to take comments on any bits and pieces.

Drew Smith: We agreed on the programme in Glasgow and I am happy to support it, but an issue about the importance of outdoor activity has

arisen from today's evidence session. I am sure that we will be mindful of trying to raise that issue where we can in the programme that we have agreed, but I would like to know from you, convener, or from the clerks whether there is a way in which we can raise the issue of outdoor activity separately with other parliamentary committees and anyone else who might be considering doing work around the issue. Obviously, there is an education interest in the educational services element of outdoor activity.

The Convener: Do other members wish to comment on that?

Richard Lyle: I take Drew Smith's point. For years, I had a specific interest in play areas and how they were being reduced in numbers and not being upgraded. However, sport is just like health in that it has so many components and we cannot cover them all.

I welcome this morning's inquiry evidence and the fact that we were able to get into some points in detail. As far as I am concerned, sport is the pumping heart of any nation and we should thank all the volunteers who make things better for all our people in that regard. The point that is coming across is the number of volunteers who support thousands of clubs and activities. I do not want to take away from Drew Smith's point, though, and if we cannot fit the issue of outdoor education into our programme, we should give it over to the Education and Culture Committee.

Dr Simpson: An interesting issue arose from this morning's evidence about an area that we have not looked at closely, which is sport's relationship with business and business sponsorship. For example, in Auckland, businesses sponsor 200 touch rugby teams that compete with each other. It is part of businesses' attempt to keep their people fit and healthy, reduce sickness absence and so on.

I suggest that we do a couple of things in our programme, one of which is to ask health boards what they do to promote sport for their employees, either as coaches or as participants. The other thing is to ask the Scottish centre for healthy working lives to give us some evidence about what it is doing. It is surprising that it has not submitted any evidence to us, given that it is supposed to encourage small and medium-sized businesses to develop relevant policies, which should include policies on sport.

Those are my two suggestions, although I do not suggest that we add to the number of panels or the timetable. Instead, we should seek written evidence.

Gil Paterson: There were some pleas that we should not take our eye off the ball with regard to activities and participation by concentrating only

on sport. There might be a need to look at outdoor activities, which brings in sport also, funnily enough. If we think about things such as the development of mountain biking tracks, there is a host of things that are not sport per se but are about engaging with the outdoors, and those things also keep people fit and healthy. The good thing about them is that they are enjoyed by people from across the spectrum—from when they begin to walk to when they meet their maker. I would like us to look at that.

Bob Doris: The question is how we can remain focused on sport but give a nod to those other activities and participation in physical exercise at the same time. Perhaps one of the roles that community sport hubs and clubs have is to signpost people to a range of other activities. I do not know whether we have time to look at provision outwith sport during our inquiry. If we do, that is great, but I am not sure that we will have time. The more that we do, the less focused we will become as we move towards our conclusions.

The only other thing that I would say is that I thought that the witnesses on the second panel suggested that local community planning is quite effective in relation to sport. They mentioned the review of community planning partnerships. I think that that has been concluded, but I could be wrong. As an action point, rather than waiting until the end of the inquiry and saying something about the issue then, we could drop a brief line to Derek Mackay, who I think is the responsible minister, to draw his attention to the fact that community planning seemed to be working well in relation to sport and ask how that is being taken forward with the review. We could do that in tandem with the other work that we are doing.

The Convener: It was an interesting session and members' comments in response to it have been helpful. Bob Doris sounded a note of caution and said that we have to be careful that we do not just meander along, although that is not to diminish some of the issues and points that were raised. Do members agree to take his point and, rather than making any further decisions, to agree to the programme as it has been presented? We could ask the clerks to come back next week with a short note about the issues that have been raised and the discussion that the committee has had. We could then proceed on that basis and consider next week any actions that we think appropriate. Do members agree to that?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: Thank you all for your attendance this morning, your patience and your participation.

Meeting closed at 13:09.

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