NHS Borders Public Health Department have collated the following responses to the call for views from key partners who provide sport and physical activity opportunities in the Scottish Borders, Live Borders, Walk it and Scottish Borders Joint Health Improvement Team.

**Participation**

1. Can you provide examples where a community based approach has been successful in removing barriers to participation in sport and physical activity?

   a) **Burnfoot Primary School Boxing programme**
   This example is a targeted approach for children in an area of SIMD which aims to improve attainment and focus on positive behavioural outcomes through a programme of curricular and extra curricular boxing. This is a partnership approach between Community Learning & Development, the school and the Boxing Club and is supported by the Active Schools team. This has not only encouraged and supported improved attainment and reductions in sporting inequalities, but has strengthened the transition for these pupils into the community club environment.

   b) **Various “Passport” type projects linked to major events (Commonwealth & Olympic)**
   The Borders have had high levels of engagement with projects like this which encourage children to engage with major sporting events by participating in a range of sports locally. Participants have incentive to accumulate points as they try new activities. Local clubs are signed up to the project and use the project as a potential way to recruit new members.

   c) **Clubsport Tweeddale and Peebles Youth Trust**
   Clubsport Tweeddale is an organisation consisting of volunteers who represent the interests of local sporting clubs in the area. They provide funding assistance locally to develop and sustain the work of clubs. Peebles Youth Trust are a third sector organisation who work with young people, many of whom have disengaged with their communities or who face health inequalities. The project provides funding to PYT to trial sports sessions for their clients using sports clubs as the vehicle to support this.

   d) **Maternal Healthy Weight Programme**
   The Health Improvement team coordinated a maternal healthy weight programme which enabled a Health Improvement specialist midwife to refer pregnant women with a high BMI to Live Borders for exercise classes as well as providing healthy eating advice using motivational interviewing approaches. The offer of physical activity was designed to minimise discomfort or embarrassment for women who participated.

   e) **Walk it** is the Scottish Borders branch of the Paths for All Health walk programme. It has twenty seven walking groups covering all the major towns and some Borders villages. There are over one thousand registered walkers and over seventy volunteer walk leaders. Eighty per cent of its walkers are aged over fifty five and of these seventy four per cent are female. Funding for a part time project coordinator is provided by NHS Borders and the post is hosted by Scottish Borders Council in the Planning and Economic Development department. Health walks are normally held on a weekly basis. Walk it walks are accessible to all and an easy activity to undertake.

   f) **Health Condition Exercise Classes**
   A partnership approach between Live Borders and the Health Improvement team has led to the provision of community based exercise classes for people with a range of health conditions. NHS
Borders healthcare professionals are able to refer patients to discounted exercise classes tailored to their needs.

2. What were the key ingredients to that success?

We believe the success of such initiatives lies in the partnership approach between key stakeholders so that there is an understanding of the outcomes trying to be achieved and each organisation’s role and responsibility in that process. It is important to understand the needs of the particular groups and their motivations to participate in the first place. At times planning of activities can be driven by the organisation (e.g. opening hours) rather than the target market.

Key ingredients to the success of Walk it project are, walks are free of charge, accessible to most people and provide a strong social element. Also through awareness raising and publicity the Walk it project is well supported by healthcare professionals.

3. Were there any approaches that were particularly successful in increasing participation among certain social groups, like women, ethnic minorities, certain age-groups?

Much of this answer relates to answer 2. A particular local approach to girls’ participation has been the Fit For Girls initiative at Tri Fitness in Galashiels. This project has developed over time but is essentially allowing teenage girls exclusive access to a commercial gym at a weekend. The success of the project relates to understanding the target market and working with them to reduce as many of the perceived barriers to participation (body image, venue, mixed sex participation, stigma of physical activity). The gym facility closes at the weekend and immediately reopens for girls only where they have reduced cost access in a friendly, girls-only environment. Much of the marketing and promotion to the girls takes place on social media forums used heavily by this age group (facebook, Instagram, twitter).

The Walk it project has a comprehensive programme of inclusive, mainstream health walks covering all major settlements and some smaller communities in the Borders. However walks are also targeted at particular groups. Examples of these are Buggy walking groups, Dementia friendly walks, Borders Disability Walking Group, walks in areas of deprivation and specific walks targeted at ethnic minority groups.

4. To what extent are these approaches unique to a particular area and set of circumstances, or replicable in other parts of the country?

The concepts of these approaches are replicable but simply lifting something from one area and replicate in another will not necessarily provide successful outcomes. Understanding your own outcomes and target markets is the only sure way to ensure success. It’s also worth noting that whilst all of these are successful approaches, the resource to make them happen is quite often substantial compared to the participation gains. The result is a requirement to be able to believe and evidence strategic outcomes locally rather than rely on the measure of ‘numbers through the door’ which will not fully represent the value of such work.

Walk it is already replicated across Scotland through Paths for All.

Community and volunteers

5. What are the barriers facing volunteers, (either those wanting to volunteer for the first time or sustaining ongoing volunteering)?
The conversion of volunteering interest from large events e.g. Commonwealth games, has been minimal. It is a very different experience to volunteer at a high profile one-off event compared to a routine of weekly organising and volunteering at a local club. Sustained volunteering is likely to require the latter. As an organisation, Live Borders are predominantly looking for volunteers to lead activities or coaching sport and physical activity sessions, a volunteering opportunity not readily on offer at a major global event.

Particular barriers in the Scottish Borders include the rural nature of the area in terms of transport and small population groups. The recruitment process can be a barrier due to timescales to carry out PVG checks, induction etc during which time volunteers’ circumstances may change. Ongoing support for volunteers can also be a barrier against a backdrop of reducing resources (staffing and finance).

However, in Walk it we have worked hard to take away barriers for volunteers. They are provided with training to enable them to lead a health walk. Training for new volunteers is provided on a regular basis across the Borders. Volunteers can take on differing levels of commitments. There is a robust process when entering the project which includes an induction, additional training in first aid and map reading skills and regular meetings with the Project coordinator as well as an annual Conference and Reward Ceremony.

6. How might these barriers be overcome?

Ensuring that resources are available to appropriately support volunteering. Also, the establishment of a national standard induction or recognition for volunteering qualification. If the induction process for a volunteer became a recognised qualification or certificate, it might be easier to attract volunteers to become involved.

Volunteers give their time generally because they want to without wishing recognition or reward. However if there was a national series of certificates/awards aligned to the Scottish Certificated Qualifications Framework (SCQF) that awarded vocational qualifications to volunteers, then people would be gaining a qualification simply for doing what they are already doing. This type of scheme does exist, and is happening on a pilot basis in the Scottish Borders but the cost is so prohibitive that unless significant funding is found, it will always be a pilot as opposed to standard practice.

The formal processes required to ensure public protection and safety for volunteers can feel daunting to someone who is just wanting to donate a couple of hours a week of their time. There may be potential to streamline this process while ensuring safeguarding is in place.

The Walk it project works hard to create a successful volunteering programme. Critical factors have been;
- Creating a Volunteering Policy
- Reward and recognise volunteers
- Refund expenses
- Meet with volunteers and provide support
- Listen to their feedback and utilise this in making improvements
- Offer continuous development
7. **What are the challenges in retaining volunteers beyond the short term?**

It is the same challenges that exist at all stages of volunteer management:
- Time to support volunteers
- In many instances, voluntary committees trying to support volunteers
- The balance between the procedural requirements, upskilling of volunteers and making them feel that it is not a chore.

Walk it believe that in order to retain volunteers beyond the short term it is important to support, nurture, and engage volunteers. It is also very important to recognise and reward volunteers if you wish to retain them.

8. **What examples are there of good practice to encourage and maintain volunteers in community sport and are there lessons to learn from other sectors around attracting and retaining volunteers?**

The Active Schools network is a good example of how to encourage and maintain volunteers in community sport. It has provided community sport with the crucial link to school sport and shown how their own organisations can benefit by volunteering within both sectors.

Accreditation schemes may be a further way for groups and organisations to demonstrate their good practice around volunteering. “Volunteer Friendly” is a straightforward accreditation process that asks groups and organisations to self-assess across key volunteering themes to identify strengths and weakness. Successful portfolios gain Volunteer Friendly status which not only is a worthwhile process for the organisation but hopefully allows potential volunteers some assurances about the environment that they will be operating in.

The third sector is an area where there is currently a lack of joined up thinking/sharing/working with sport. These organisations have large volunteer numbers and also engage with many of the targeted groups such as disengaged, social deprivation, disability, and so have much to share with the sport sector.

Programmes from health such as the McMillan Move More programme are volunteer led and they have a robust format for volunteer recruitment.

9. **Can you provide examples of innovative joint working between clubs and public bodies that are utilising available sources of funding?**

The Community Empowerment Act and participatory budgeting represent an opportunity to support local activity where a small investment in resources can provide a big opportunity, for example, in a recent pilot in Burnfoot a considerable number of the applications via the participatory budgeting process came from community groups for equipment and resources to provide more and a wider range of physical activity opportunities for a greater cross section of the community.

**School estate**

10. **To what extent is the school estate currently been used effectively to increase opportunities for sport and physical activity participation?**

The school estate is effectively used across the Scottish Borders, however it may be due to a lack of other similar facilities which forces groups to make use of the estate. Quality of facilities across the board is widely varied with some good PPP school provision through to other ageing estate buildings.
which are in need of investment and are not attractive as a way to engage and support quality experiences.

Whilst the school estate is well utilised, it could be questioned that the estate functions on historical bookings and so priority use is not available at key times to children and young people for developmental work.

11. **In what ways has access to the school estate for communities improved in recent years?**

As stated in question 10, access to the secondary school estate has always been good.

12. **What are the remaining barriers to use of the school estate? Please also note any particular issues around term-time compared with school holiday time.**

The management of the school estate continues to be problematic. Scottish Borders PPP secondary schools have a centralised booking process which is far more effective than where schools manage their own bookings. One key challenge is the control and influence that PE departments can hold over bookings, particularly between 4-6pm. Even if a school does not require the facility for their own extra-curricular programme at this time it can be really challenging for a potential group/club/organisation to understand how to book a slot during this time. Schools cite child protection issues as a part of this in that they don’t want unknown coaches or groups in the school premises when they still have their own programmes running.

None of the above really addresses the challenge of weekend and holiday time bookings. If the school manages their own estate with regards bookings, then if a booking is not made within school hours (9.00-4.00 Mon-Fri), it is virtually impossible to book a facility during any other time period. If a group required a facility at the last minute at a weekend due to inclement weather then there is nobody available to deal with it.

13. **How might these barriers be overcome?**

Predominantly, some form of centralised booking system that is not reliant on the school to physically deal with managing bookings. If Leisure and Culture Trusts operate in an area and have the resource and systems to manage the school estate then it would go a long way to dealing with the barriers mentioned above.

**Commonwealth Games Legacy**

14. **How would you assess the active legacy of the Commonwealth Games for:**
   - Community benefits and
   - Participation rates

The Scottish Borders saw documented increases in participation during and following the Commonwealth Games, including the highest levels of participation we had ever recorded. Our Commonwealth Passport was a big driver for the area and our clubs also reported excellent qualitative data about their involvement in this project and the subsequent increase in numbers joining local clubs.

It is the responsibility of Local Authority areas to take up the mantle and aspire to inspire their local communities to participate and get involved.
There was perhaps a lack of joined up planning around legacy and what the outcomes for this were. There is much anecdotal evidence and an abundance of participation data around programmes like Active Schools but a lack of real impact work to reflect on.

Additionally

15. To what extent are the new facilities being used to maximum capacity?
   N/A

16. Are there any examples of innovative uses of the new facilities benefitting the community?
   N/A

17. Is the physical infrastructure built for the Commonwealth Games being used effectively to increase opportunities for sport and physical activity; and increasing rates of sport and physical activity participation?
   N/A