

Creating a fairer Britain

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Out There Policy

Outcome

A new guiding principle added to Out There establishing that equality of access to the outdoors is essential. Revision of the policy to encourage provision for previously excluded groups including disabled people, families and people on low incomes

Objective

Out There is sportscotland's policy statement on sport and recreation in the outdoors. Its purpose is to set out sportscotland's aspirations for outdoor sports in Scotland.

In line with the requirements of the equality duties, an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was carried out on this strategy. As a result of the EIA process, a number of equality issues were identified, and the strategy was revised. Many of the equality issues identified were common across all sports; however, there were also a number of issues that were of particular relevance to sport and physical recreation as practised in Scotland's outdoors. It was apparent that some groups, including women, people from ethnic minorities and young people, experienced feelings of vulnerability in the outdoors, or did not feel welcome at outdoor facilities. Some groups were excluded because of lack of opportunities to access the outdoors close to where they lived or because they did not have access to a car. Disabled people could be excluded because of physical barriers to access, such as stiles or steps, or simply because of lack of information on opportunities that existed to give access to the outdoors. Older people, disabled people and young families did not take advantage of the outdoors because of lack of support facilities such as car parking and toilets, or dining and baby-changing facilities. Young people also reported visiting the outdoors as boring or unfashionable.

A general lack of knowledge and understanding about the outdoors prevented some groups from participating. People were unsure of their rights when accessing the outdoors – for instance, where they were permitted to go and where they were not. Some sports by their very nature put some people off; because of perceptions about the skills and knowledge needed to participate in them, or the cost of participation, or the macho image that can accompany particular sports. It was clear that all these issues and barriers to participation were interlinked and common across several excluded groups.

How this was undertaken

sportscotland consulted with a range of equalities groups including the Scottish Disability Equality Forum, Outdoor Lads, the Gay Outdoor Club, Cairngorms National Park Authority (Equity Officer) and Pammy Johal consultants (of the outdoors organisation Backbone). Information from previous consultation exercises or research projects was also included. The national Countryside Recreation Network organised events and produced a number of publications about the barriers to access reported by many of the equalities groups. sportscotland also carried out some of its own research: for example, Older People, Age and Physical Activity, and Making Women and Girls More Active. The work carried out for sportscotland's single equality scheme also provided relevant data.

Results

The outcome of this work was, firstly, that the policy Out There was revised. A new guiding principle was added to Out There making it clear that all kinds of people should be able to get involved and encouraged to participate in outdoor sport. Some key policy statements were added, promoting the need to provide facilities and opportunities for sport close to where people live.

Policy was revised to encourage provision for disabled people and young families in the implementation of access rights, including provision for wheelchair users and families with buggies in path development. The policy on charging for sport use of the outdoors was revised to encourage charges to be set at a level that would not exclude certain groups because of cost.

The crucial point emerging from the EIA of Out There, is that equality and inclusion need to be central in the provision of sport in the outdoors. It is also recognised that it is crucial to consult and involve excluded groups, to identify their issues and barriers to their involvement, and to work with them in identifying solutions.

sportscotland continues to demonstrate its commitment to working in this area. The work will be crucial in informing sportscotland's approach to equality issues in outdoor sport and may have some very tangible outcomes in terms of increasing numbers of previously excluded groups participating in sport and recreation in the outdoors. Out There will provide the basis for sportscotland's work on sport in the outdoors, for instance in consultation responses, joint project work, strategy development, advisory/demonstration work, facilities work and, to a degree, the work of the centres (training programmes and so on).

sportscotland found that consultation and involvement were essential parts of the policy-making process. Key lessons from this process included:

- the need to let people know that they have a right to access the outdoors, that outdoor sport is affordable and easy to participate in, and that outdoor sport is relevant to everyone

- the need to present information in a range of formats and languages and in the right places to be relevant to the audience you are trying to reach

- it is important not to make assumptions about what people want to do in the outdoors or about what they are able to do, but to give them the sort of information that allows people to make decisions for themselves

- the role of social support networks should be promoted, thus increasing people's confidence to access the outdoors and reducing feelings of vulnerability

- the role of access in single-gender groups is highlighted as this can be important for cultural or religious reasons

- the benefit should be stressed of providing training on how to interact with and provide for excluded groups for rangers and other staff who engage with people and the outdoors

- it is crucial to involve excluded groups in decision-making and in identifying barriers to their participation, and what will positively address these barriers

- the need to avoid making assumptions about, or stereotyping, particular groups

sportscotland's vision is for '... a future where everyone who wants to can take part in sport and recreation in the outdoors; a future where people are encouraged to do so, regardless of ability or background'. The adjustments made to Out There will contribute to achieving the vision.

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