



PRO BONO ECONOMICS

Budget Submission 2018

Executive Summary

The country faces a challenge potentially unprecedented in recent times with its prospective departure from the European Union (EU) in 2019 – As the UK approaches its forthcoming exit from the EU, all parts of civil society face considerable uncertainty regarding the effects this will have on our culture and economic competitiveness. The nature of the future relationship between this country and the remainder of the EU-27 will be of critical importance in securing the economic integrity of the UK not only for today, but for years, decades and potentially generations to come. It is therefore quite right that no stone is left unturned in pursuit of an agreement with our continental partners that protects the fundamentals of this economy, the jobs it provides, and the public services it supports, following March 29th 2019.

However, addressing the wellbeing of the UK population cannot be parked until after “Brexit”, not only because of our obligation to provide every feasible support and opportunity for current and future generations, but also for grounded economic reasons – Despite the gravity of the task negotiating the UK’s withdrawal from the EU entails, this country and its Government must not shy away from many of the deep rooted problems that so threaten the wellbeing of the national population, and consequently its economic and productive potential. The wellbeing and prospects of today’s children as well as those of future generations are naturally of pivotal importance in this regard, and can be enhanced in many different ways through sometimes modest actions. The multiplier effects of such interventions – explored in greater detail below – can result in adults taking fewer days sick-leave as a consequence of mental ill-health, therefore putting less economic strain on our public services (not least the National Health Service), and could ultimately help solve the “productivity puzzle” that continues to undermine the competitiveness of the UK economy.

Pro Bono Economics is well placed – through its work helping charities improve their impact – to offer evidence-based observations and recommendations on how the wellbeing of UK society can be improved, and thus better achieve its economic potential – [Pro Bono Economics](#) (PBE) works to help charities integrate good data and impact management processes into their operating practices so that they can understand the value of their service, and use the tools and methods we give them to improve it. Throughout 2018 our work has focused on supporting charitable projects active in: i) education; ii) employment; iii) mental health; and iv) poverty. In light of our collaborative efforts on several initiatives within these fields we are able to offer insights drawn from rigorous analysis and data collection on the following areas:

- i) The disproportionately large benefits primary school counselling can generate for the wider economy;
- ii) The support an increased prominence of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) in the national curriculum gives children in pursuit of realising their economic potential; and
- iii) How the efficacy of public interventions aimed at increasing physical activity in young people can be improved.

We have selected these areas as worthy of focus here as they provide some of the most pertinent insights into live policy debates taking place in the UK. For example, the Department for Education’s (DfE) Call for Evidence on Changes to the teaching of Sex & Relationship Education and PSHE¹ – closed for comment in February, to which PBE submitted evidence², while we have already made a representation³ to the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) Select Committee on “The social impact of participation in culture and sport inquiry”, which remains ongoing. With this, our inaugural Budget Submission, we hope to ensure they remain salient topics for policy debate and ultimately reform. We look forward to continuing the discussion moving forward, not only on these issues, but all those affecting the wellbeing of our domestic population and being addressed by the incredible work undertaken by the charities we support.

¹ Department for Education (2018) - Changes to the teaching of Sex & Relationship Education and PSHE - <https://consult.education.gov.uk/life-skills/pshe-rse-call-for-evidence/>

² PBE (2018) Letter from Pro Bono Economics - evidence to support statutory PSHE in schools - <https://www.probonoeconomics.com/sites/default/files/files/Letter%20from%20Pro%20Bono%20Economics%20-%20evidence%20to%20support%20statutory%20PSHE%20in%20schools%20%5B12.02.2018%5D.pdf>

³ PBE (2018) Written Evidence submitted to the DCMS Select Committee inquiry: The social impact of participation in culture and sport inquiry - <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/digital-culture-media-and-sport-committee/the-social-impact-of-participation-in-culture-and-sport/written/86797.pdf>

1. The provision of more widespread counselling services in primary school offers the potential of generating significant economic benefits resulting from improved outcomes for children in adolescence and adulthood.

Earlier this year, [Place2Be](#) - a children's mental health charity that provides in-school support and training to improve the emotional wellbeing of pupils, families, and staff in primary and secondary schools - approached PBE to assess the value for money of its one-to-one counselling service in primary schools. Using data from 251 primary schools supporting 4548 children with one-to-one counselling, the following report was produced for Place2Be: "Economic evaluation of Place2Be's Counselling Service in Primary Schools"⁴.

The analysis of the 2016/17 counselling scheme shows that every £1 invested in the service resulted in a £6.20 benefit in terms of improved long-term outcomes. These range from reduced rates of truancy, smoking, exclusion, depression and crime, and higher levels of employment and wages. In total, the service cost of the sample in question was £4.2 million, with an estimated benefit of £25.9 million for all children who received counselling, over £5700 per child. Such figures illustrate the economic potential of wellbeing interventions, often portrayed in a somewhat glib fashion as being *only* altruistic, an assertion which appears misguided on present evidence.

We would also note that the Scottish Government has seemingly been convinced of the merits of expanding provision of such counselling, with its Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027⁵. The first action under the section entitled "Prevention and Early Intervention" reads as follows: "Review Personal and Social Education (PSE), the role of pastoral guidance in local authority schools, and **services for counselling for children and young people**" (emphasis added). This objective has now been carried forward into the 2018 Strategy for Government⁶, which states: "To make sure that children and young people have the support they need at the earliest possible stage we will...invest over £60 million in additional school counselling services across all of Scotland".

At a time when fiscal prudence remains of paramount importance we recognise the funding constraints facing public services across the country, but it is for these reasons that the cost/return statistics here make such compelling reading. We do not offer policy recommendations at this point but urge policymakers in Westminster to monitor developments closely in Scotland to see if lessons can be drawn from that experience⁷, on how rather than if the provision of such counselling can be expanded for children in England and Wales.

2. Greater emphasis on PSHE at secondary level can help improve pupils' attendance and academic achievement, with the impact especially pronounced on children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds.

The previous quote from the Scottish Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027, also makes reference to the need to review personal and social education provision. As mentioned in this paper's Executive Summary, we have submitted evidence previously to a similar consultative exercise undertaken by the DfE earlier this year reviewing the content of PSHE within schools in England and Wales. As we are yet to hear anything by way of concrete follow-up to this initiative we now see fit to raise this issue again here.

Over the last calendar year PBE has collaborated with the PSHE Association regarding the broader value on pupils' wellbeing of having this subject featuring more prominently within schools, work that culminated with

⁴ PBE (2018) Economic evaluation of Place2Be's Counselling Service in Primary Schools – A Pro Bono Economics Report for Place2Be - https://www.probonoeconomics.com/sites/default/files/files/Economic%20Evaluation%20of%20Place2Be%E2%80%99s%20Counselling%20Service%20in%20Primary%20Schools_0.pdf

⁵ Scottish Government (2017) Mental Health Strategy: 2017-2027 - <https://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00516047.pdf>

⁶ Scottish Government (2018) Delivering for Today, Investing for Tomorrow – The Government's Programme for Scotland 2018-19 - <https://beta.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/publication/2018/09/delivering-today-investing-tomorrow-governments-programme-scotland-2018-19/documents/00539972-pdf/00539972-pdf/govscot:document/>

⁷ PBE is currently examining the comparability of sample groups in England/Wales and Scotland, and intends to report on that in due course.

the report: “Literature Review Evaluating the Impact of PSHE on Students’ Health, Wellbeing and Academic Attainment”⁸.

The study showed strong evidence that PSHE education has a positive impact on academic attainment and does not detract from other core curriculum subjects, as critics often suggest. The analysis found that school-based anti-bullying programmes resulted in a decrease in bullying and victimisation, and showed children with higher levels of behavioural, emotional, social and school wellbeing have higher levels of academic achievement.

As with the potential inherent within a possible expansion in the provision of school counselling as covered in Section 1, we see the possibility for greater prominence for PSHE within school curriculums as representing relative “low-hanging fruit” from a policy reform perspective. Given the Scottish Government is also reviewing its approach here, we would again urge cognisance of what is happening north of the border and a process of regular information exchange between respective education authorities so as to ensure the role played by PSHE within schools can be continually refined so as to ensure best outcomes for children and indeed, the wider economy.

3. A new informed and dedicated capacity that can evaluate the delivery and effectiveness of current public interventions aimed at increasing levels of physical activities by children is essential, if best practice is to be learned, shared, and the efficacy of future initiatives to be improved.

Today’s children are the least active since records began, and one in five children in the UK are now considered obese. At present only 15% of girls and 22% of boys do the required one hour of exercise per day, and only a small percentage of these take part in sport or organised physical activity programmes. Approximately one in five people in the UK experience a mental health problem each year, with one in six reporting a common mental health problem (such as anxiety and depression) in any given week.

Such statistics make for sober reading, given how strong the correlation is between physical, emotional and mental wellbeing, not to mention the deleterious effects a lack thereof can have on an individual’s economic productivity. Unfortunately and despite laudable intentions it is our view that current physical activity interventions from Westminster lack the rigorous impact and outcomes frameworks that would enable them to realise their full potential and begin addressing in a tackling the causes of the troubling numbers mentioned above.

We note that the DCMS has acknowledged the need for a joined-up approach to the delivery and funding of the Sporting Futures strategy across government, something which we thoroughly support. There is an urgent need for a cohesive approach linking central government planning with Sport England and local implementation. To be successful, the overall strategy must be evaluated with reference to specific school/out-of-school sports programmes, and to defined outcomes using prescribed methods of measuring impact and monitoring outcomes. However, the existing de-centralised commissioning, monitoring and evaluation framework renders the above a significant challenge.

We have put already outlined our views on this topic in somewhat more detail within the previously-mentioned submission to the DCMS Select Committee inquiry. Although that work remains ongoing we feel it would be remiss not to use every opportunity to raise this issue with Government, and for fear of repetition, detail those recommendations once again here.

1. Establish independent, informed and dedicated capacity for delivery and evaluation

DCMS, together with other Government Departments should work in conjunction with the charitable and private sectors to ensure there is – under their collective umbrella – an independent, informed and dedicated capacity for delivering and critically evaluating provision in this area. This would commission outside providers to lend their expertise to developing robust metrics and measuring and managing outcomes. This would require a rigorous, conservative and results-focused approach to these tasks. This could be in the form of a new body or

⁸ PSHE Association / PBE (December 2017) Literature Review Evaluating the Impact of PSHE on Students’ Health, Wellbeing and Academic Attainment - <https://www.probonoeconomics.com/sites/default/files/files/PSHE%20Evidence%20Review%202017.PDF>

could be executed by Sport England provided the work is seen as independent and evidence based and the new body has a mandate to develop new metrics that provide a common platform for measuring and managing success in drawing children into sport and in building mental well-being from an early age. This could be used to evaluate both public and charitable/private initiatives.

This unit/body would work with and across Non-Governmental Bodies, schools and other stakeholders to deliver a structured programme, and would be in a position to leverage other funding and expertise. It would have a secure long-term funding base (potentially an endowment funded by public sector and philanthropic sources) and an evidence-based remit (e.g. What Works Centres, the Education Endowment Foundation etc.). The unit/body would have an important role in reviewing best practice in terms of both sports programmes and, importantly the volunteering programmes which support them. There would be scope for reviewing the work of volunteering initiatives such as I Will, Join In and Step up to Serve, to ensure that the very best experience of volunteering is applied in new programmes. In particular, this unit/body could work with DCMS to set up effective public/private partnerships supporting sports in schools and in the community.

II. Embrace delivery across multiple platforms

A good example of a creative, integrated approach to different types of physical activity is the cricket and dance programme that has resulted from a partnership between the Royal Academy of Dance and Marylebone Cricket Club. Co-delivered by a professional cricket coach and a professional dance teacher, the project is designed to motivate both students who prefer an 'artistic' physical activity, and those who prefer a 'sport'.⁹

III. Encourage collaboration

Broad collaboration at all levels will ensure that the DCMS strategy is linked with that of other central government departments, local government and Sport England, as well as the academic community and private/charitable sector. Such a strategy should include:

- Collaboration at the policy level to gather data and set the right evidence-based policy goals, by DCMS/Sport England. This should apply both within Government, but also reaching out to local government and interested charitable and private sector organisations; and
- Collaboration in achieving these goals by establishing an effective delivery framework, drawing in and disbursing both public and private funding.

It is important that DCMS should work across Government and engage with other departments that can offer valuable knowledge, data and expertise, e.g. Department for Education, Public Health England, the Ministry of Justice, Home Office, Department of Health and the Office for National Statistics. Equally important is ensuring that Sport England's significant role in monitoring pupil progress in sport is joined up with other initiatives. In addition, DCMS partnerships with key charities and academic institutions will help it evolve its strategy and improve the evidence base for its key outcomes and deliverables. These partnerships can also assist in identifying priorities and providing valuable top-down direction on programmes to achieve policy outcomes. Partnerships with charities, social enterprises and the private sector could also leverage Government resources in supported programmes. A new delivery authority with representatives from DCMS/Sport England and the charitable/private sectors could facilitate integration of public and private funding.

⁹ "Active". rad.org.uk. <https://www.rad.org.uk/learn-to-dance/project-b/b-active> (accessed September 01, 2017).