



***A CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE
OF GLASGOW SCHOOL
OF SPORT***

REPORT



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Report Summary

1. Context

- In February 2025, Glasgow Life presented a proposal to the City Administration Committee to phase out the Glasgow School of Sport by June 2026 and introduce a bursary scheme, following a joint review with Education Services.
- Glasgow Life withdrew its proposal after councillors raised concerns about the lack of consultation and strong stakeholder resistance, requesting wider engagement before decisions.
- In April 2025, Glasgow Life submitted a paper to the Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community and Citizen Engagement (WECCE) Committee recommending a strategic review, aligned with the city's Physical Activity and Sport Strategy, and committing to carry out consultation as part of that review.
- The *overall* process of consultation has gathered views from GSOS pupils, parents/guardians, Talented Sports Performer Scheme participants, National Governing Bodies, Sportscotland, and local sports clubs. The perspectives from the different stakeholders will inform 'a paper brought back to the relevant committee setting out the findings of the consultation and the proposed next steps to ensure that Glasgow's talented sports people are appropriately supported.'
- As part of this wider consultation, Glasgow Life appointed Kinharvie to facilitate the GSOS consultation, which gathered the views of pupils and their parents/guardians on the value of the current GSOS offer and the potential impact of changes to this offer.

2. Engagement in the GSOS Consultation Process

- Engagement: two consultation sessions (58 invitations were sent. 13 pupils were represented in each session), online survey (51 partial, 37 complete), and three people making email submissions.
- Survey responses: 90% parents/guardians, 10% pupils.

3. Key Findings

A. Benefits of GSOS and Anticipated Impacts of Closure

- Stakeholders said GSOS provides unique support not available elsewhere in Scotland's state education system, stressing that each benefit would be lost – with equal cost – if the school closed:

Benefit of GSOS	Anticipated Impact of Closure
Integrated timetable – pupils can train during the school day without sacrificing academic progress.	Pupils would face clashes between training and classes, making it harder to sustain both sport and education.
Specialist daily coaching and easy and scheduled access to facilities – elite-level provision built into the school.	82% predicted a very negative impact on sporting development; most said no equivalent, affordable alternative exists.
Strength and conditioning, sport science and medical support – aligned with pupils' stage of development.	Loss of wrap-around provision; families said these supports are not realistically available outside GSOS.



Peer environment of athletes – motivation, resilience and identity from learning alongside others on the same path.	Greater isolation and reduced motivation; 66% predicted a very negative impact on pupils' wellbeing.
Proven pathway to scholarships and elite sport – many former pupils progress to national teams	Dramatically reduced progression routes; risk to Scotland's sporting pipeline and reputation.
Stable family routines – training within school hours avoids late-night travel and reduces strain.	71% predicted disruption to routines, finances, and logistics; families said closure would make continued participation unsustainable.
Equity of access – opportunities based on talent rather than ability to pay.	Families feared provision would depend heavily on wealth, widening inequality of access to elite sport.

B. Support Needed if GSOS Closed or Was Reduced

Stakeholders were asked what support would be most important in two possible scenarios – closure or reduction of services. While clear priorities emerged, many also stressed that GSOS' distinctive value comes from the *integration* of education, daily coaching, facilities, and wrap-around support as a single model.

If GSOS were to close:

Responses centred on three top priorities:

- **High-quality coaching** – the overwhelming priority, seen as essential to prevent progress stalling.
- **Strength and conditioning** and **affordable facilities** – rated just below coaching, both widely viewed as critical.
- **Academic flexibility** – needed but mentioned less often.
- **Financial support (scholarships/bursaries)** – important for some families, though less frequently prioritised.

If GSOS were to be reduced:

Stakeholders highlighted a core set of elements as indispensable:

- **Specialist coaching, integrated timetables, and facilities** – most often cited as the “core” of GSOS.
- **Strength and conditioning** – strongly valued but just below the top tier.
- **Wrap-around services** (sport science, physiotherapy, pastoral care) – part of what makes GSOS distinctive, though raised less often.
- **Peer community of athletes** – recognised as vital to motivation and wellbeing, but described more as an outcome of the integrated model than a standalone feature.

C. Stakeholders' Perspectives on the Decision-Making Process

- One of the strongest themes to emerge was concern about both the decision-making process itself and the transparency and accuracy of information. Although not part of the original scope, it is included here because stakeholders felt the picture would be incomplete without it.
- Stakeholders said the prolonged uncertainty has disrupted pupils' exams, competitions, and subject choices, leaving many unable to plan for the future.



- Stakeholders reported struggling to get straight answers. Emails often went unanswered, and replies were described as vague or incomplete. This reinforced their impression that Glasgow Life had already decided the outcome.
- Many stakeholders contrasted GSOS with the Dance School of Scotland, noting that the latter is fully protected within Education Services while GSOS is managed by Glasgow Life. They said this gave an impression of unequal treatment and poor governance, and some argued that an Integrated Impact Assessment required under the Equality Act 2010 should have been carried out but was not.
- Those involved described information and consultation sessions, facilitated by Kinharvie, as negative and opaque, deepening mistrust.
- Funding was the most contested issue. Glasgow Life argued GSOS was financially unsustainable, citing a cost of £380k per year for educating non-Glasgow pupils. Stakeholders said this figure was misleading, noting it came from a withdrawn report, was unsupported by evidence, and ignored that GSOS is funded nationally through the Scottish Government's General Revenue Grant (GRG).
- This led to a central unanswered question: What happens to the Centre of Excellence funding provided by the Scottish Government to Glasgow City Council if it is not fully passed on to GSOS? Stakeholders said the lack of clarity raised concerns about transparency and possible mismanagement of public funds.
- Stakeholders also contacted National Governing Bodies, who, they claim, confirmed they could not replicate GSOS's integrated provision.
- Some asked why GSOS was presented as unaffordable when Glasgow Life's accounts showed a healthy surplus.

D. Implications for the Decision-Making Process to Come

To give stakeholders confidence in the decisions ahead, they said it is essential that councillors and Glasgow Life ensure the process and outcome are clear, fair, and informed by their perspectives.

- **Transparency:** Decisions must be evidence-based, clearly explained, and visibly fair.
- **Communication:** Pupils and families need prompt, unambiguous information on the outcome and what it means for education and training.
- **Awareness of the wider impact:** Councillors must also weigh how closure or reduction would be perceived – as a retreat from Scotland's sporting ambitions, especially damaging in the run-up to the 2026 Commonwealth Games.



1. Introduction

1.a) Context

In late 2024, Glasgow Life and Education Services completed a review of the Glasgow School of Sport (GSOS), highlighting financial pressures and the need for a more sustainable approach to supporting talented young athletes.

On 27 February 2025, Glasgow Life presented proposals to the City Administration Committee recommending that the GSOS model be phased out by June 2026 and replaced with a system enabling athletes to access performance pathways delivered by National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and sports clubs. The paper also proposed creating a sports bursary scheme to provide financial support for Glasgow's talented athletes. Councillors, however, raised concerns about the lack of consultation and noted strong resistance from some stakeholders. The paper was withdrawn, and elected members requested further consultation before any decisions were made.

In response, Glasgow Life presented a paper to the Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community and Citizen Engagement (WECCE) Committee on 17 April 2025, which included recommending a consultation exercise. This consultation would gather views from GSOS pupils and their parents or guardians, as well as other stakeholders including participants in the Talented Sports Performer Scheme, National Governing Bodies of Sport, Sportscotland, and local sports clubs that support athletes competing at national and international levels. The findings will inform future decisions on how Glasgow can best support its talented sports performers.

1.b) Purpose of Consultation with GSOS Stakeholders

Kinharvie was engaged by Glasgow Life to facilitate a consultation process with pupils of Glasgow School of Sport (GSOS) and their parents/guardians with the following purpose:

- To consult pupils of Glasgow School of Sport and their parents/guardians on:
 - the benefits to them if the school remained open, and the impact on them if it closed;
 - which services provided by the school they value most.
- To present a clear summary of the main themes emerging from those consulted.

1.c) Introduction to this Report

What became striking to us as we facilitated this process was that many comments from stakeholders¹ were not only about the possible impacts of closure or change, but about how the decision-making process had been conducted to this point. Stakeholders repeatedly expressed deep anger and frustration about how the process was framed and communicated, the inaccuracies shared, and the exclusion of their voices. It was clear to us that omitting these reflections would fail to represent their experience faithfully. For this reason, the report includes a

¹ In this report, the term "stakeholders" is used to cover both pupils and parents/guardians, unless it is necessary to refer to one group specifically.



dedicated section on stakeholders' experience of the consultation and the ways this has affected them.

It should be noted that stakeholders had already sought to make their voices heard through a wide range of channels, including press coverage, petitions, direct representations to councillors, staff at Glasgow Life, and Bellahouston Academy, as well as through social media campaigns. This report does not replace those contributions. Instead, it complements these efforts by offering an inclusive process for all GSOS pupils and their parents or guardians, creating a shared space where their voices can be heard collectively and carry meaningful weight.

Rather than presenting an exhaustive account of every contribution – which would be overwhelming – the report distils the key themes and insights that emerged. Above all, it seeks to bring together the voices of those most directly affected by changes to GSOS, ensuring their experiences are not overlooked in decisions about the school's future.

Kinharvie

October 2025



2. Methodology

An overview of the process employed during this consultation process is presented below in Diagram 1:



Diagram 1 – Review Methodology

2.a) Immersion

To gain insight into the perspectives and experiences of stakeholders in Glasgow School of Sport (GSOS), we created the following consultation opportunities:

i. Information and Consultation Sessions

Two separate facilitated information and consultation sessions were held on 16th and 24th June 2025 to which pupils and their parents/guardians were invited. Glasgow Life sent 58 invitations. Thirteen pupils were represented at each session (26 in total).

These sessions were designed to be an open forum where attendees could first be updated with the latest developments and ask questions of Glasgow Life staff, before moving to the more consultation-focused part of the meeting where they could share their perspectives and explore the possible impacts of GSOS closure or changes to provision. In practice, however, the sessions largely became question and answer discussions because for many attendees this was the first opportunity they had to question Glasgow Life staff face-to-face and they were hungry for information and an opportunity to directly express their frustrations about the process so far. By the time this had taken place, there was very little time left for structured consultation activities. As a result, the online survey took on a bigger role in gathering views than had initially been planned.



ii. Online Survey

An online survey was made available to all GSOS pupils and their parents/guardians. (See **Appendix 1** for the questions included in the online survey.) To ensure fairness, stakeholders were asked to submit *one* response per pupil enrolled at GSOS. The survey gathered both quantitative data (e.g. ratings of support needed) and qualitative comments on the benefits of GSOS and the likely consequences of closure. In total, 51 people completed the first page of the survey, but only 37 went on to complete the remaining questions. It is thought that some individuals may have completed the first page to review its content before deciding whether to proceed with the rest of the survey. 90% of respondents were parents, carers or guardians and 10% of respondents were pupils. Below in Table 1 is a breakdown of respondents by sport and in Table 2 by the year the pupil had completed in June 2025.

Sport Participated In				
Athletics	Gymnastics	Hockey	Swimming	Badminton
24.3%	21.6%	18.9%	21.6%	13.5%

Table 1 – % of Respondents by Sport

Note: It is important to note that GSOS supports only five sports outlined above.

Year Pupil Completed in June 2025				
S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
31.4%	15.7%	21.6%	17.6%	13.7%

Table 2 – % of Respondents by Year Pupil Completed in June 2025

iii. Dedicated Email Inbox

An email inbox was also available for any additional comments stakeholders wished to share. Three individuals used this option, with some sending more than one message.

2.b) Incubation and Illumination

This stage involved reviewing all the material gathered during the Immersion stage. Kinharvie consultants systematically examined the consultation outputs, survey responses, and email submissions. In reviewing the data, the consultants sought to make connections, notice patterns, and identify emerging themes.



2.c) Discernment, Selection, and Refinement

The emerging themes were then tested and refined to ensure they were a faithful reflection of the voices of participants. Care was taken to ensure the themes were neither exaggerated nor diluted, but represented what stakeholders *themselves* chose to emphasise. These refined themes form the basis of the findings presented in this report.

2.d) Editorial / Accuracy Review

On 30 September 2025, the Lead Facilitator sent the draft report to the General Manager of GSOS. The General Manager and colleagues at Glasgow Life took eight working days to review the document and provide feedback in three specific areas. To ensure transparency, a summary of Glasgow Life's suggested changes and Kinharvie's responses are outlined in **Appendix 2**. It is important to note that **no substantive changes** were made to the report's findings.

Note: Quotations in this report come from pupils, parents, and guardians via the survey, information and consultation meetings and emails. Many were written quickly or informally, often as short or incomplete sentences. For clarity and readability, we have lightly edited them while preserving their original meaning and intent.



3. Principal Benefits of GSOS and the Impact of Closure

3.a) Introduction

This chapter begins by presenting a quantitative overview of how stakeholders rated the likely impact of the closure of GSOS before a pupil completes S6. This provides a high-level picture of which areas of the pupil's lives are expected to be most affected. The results are then followed by a more detailed exploration of the specific benefits stakeholders associate with GSOS and the impacts they anticipate if the school were to close.

3.b) Overall Perspective of the Impact of Closure

Table 3 below shows how stakeholders rated the likely impact of GSOS closing before a pupil completes S6 on key development areas identified by Glasgow Life for this consultation. Results are ordered by the proportion of respondents who rated the impact as "Very Negative," showing where closure is expected to have the most serious effect. The greatest concerns relate to pupils' sporting development, daily routines, and access to coaching. Education, wellbeing, and motivation were also widely seen as being at significant risk. In short, stakeholders anticipate that closure would have severe adverse effects across every area of pupils' lives.

Impact Area	Very Positive	Somewhat Positive	No Impact	Somewhat Negative	Very Negative
Sporting Development	0%	0%	5%	13%	82%
Routine / Finances / Logistics	0%	0%	13%	16%	71%
Access to Training/Coaching	0%	0%	8%	24%	68%
Overall Wellbeing	0%	0%	5%	29%	66%
Education	0%	5%	8%	24%	63%
Confidence & Motivation	0%	0%	16%	29%	55%

Table 3 – Anticipated Impacts of GSOS Closure Before S6

3.c) GSOS Benefits and the Impact of Closure

Stakeholders described in detail the unique benefits of GSOS – and the profound risks if it were to close. They stressed that benefits and impacts are inseparable: every advantage pupils gain today was framed in terms of what would be lost tomorrow should the school close. The themes are presented in order of how frequently they were raised, beginning with those stakeholders emphasised most.



i) Access to World-Class Coaching and Facilities – and the Loss of Daily Expert Support

Benefit

GSOS provides regular, high quality coaching and scheduled, easy access to high-quality sporting facilities that are out of reach for most young people in state-funded education. Pupils benefit from highly qualified coaches in multiple disciplines, including sport-specific training, strength and conditioning, sports psychology, and physiotherapy. Stakeholders emphasised that this concentrated access during the school day allows children to develop to their full potential in ways that local clubs or mainstream schools cannot match.

Impact if Closed

Stakeholders warned that closure would take away this unique level of support. Without access to professional coaching and facilities integrated into their school timetable, pupils would fall behind peers who continue to receive this level of provision. Parents feared their children's performance would plateau or decline, leaving them frustrated and less confident. For many, GSOS was seen as "irreplaceable," and its closure would end the chance for pupils to train in the way required to reach the highest levels of competition.

- ⇒ *"My child has access to experienced coaches with proven track records in developing competitive swimmers, as well as strength and conditioning support and tailored training programmes."*
- ⇒ *"Exceptional international-level coaching is what sets GSOS apart. It cannot be replaced."*

ii) Balancing Education and Sport Without Burnout – and the Risk of Pupils Having to Choose

Benefit

GSOS offers a *unique* model that helps pupils to minimise, though not completely eliminate, the conflict between education and sport. While pupils in their senior years typically take fewer academic subjects and exams than peers at Bellahouston Academy or other secondary schools, the integrated timetable allows them to train during the school day while keeping pace with their studies. This means evenings can be used for homework, rest, or family time rather than late-night travel for training. Parents highlighted that this structure supports health, motivation, and success both in the classroom and in competition, with some pupils taking additional subjects where required for university entry or based on ability.

Impact if Closed

Stakeholders explained that without GSOS, this balance would disappear. Pupils would face much longer days, with training squeezed into early mornings and late evenings, often on top of long commutes. This would reduce recovery time, increase tiredness in class, and heighten the risk of stress and injury. Stakeholders worried that children would quickly feel overstretched and unable to keep up with the demands of both school and sport. Several feared their child would eventually have to give something up – either scaling back their sporting ambitions or allowing their school performance to suffer.

- ⇒ *"The balanced approach has been key to my child's academic success and confidence in learning. The reduced subject load, made possible by integrating swimming into the school day, allows them to focus deeply on studies despite the challenges of a learning difficulty."*



⇒ *“Without GSOS, children will be exhausted trying to balance sport and school. Closure would force them to choose between the two.”*

iii) A Supportive Peer Community – and the Risk of Pupils Becoming Isolated

Benefit

GSOS surrounds pupils with peers who share the same drive and discipline. Being with others who understand the sacrifices of elite sport helps young people stay motivated and resilient. Pupils see themselves as part of a community where their commitments are normal, understood, and respected. For some, this environment reduces feelings of isolation and gives them the confidence to persevere.

Impact if Closed

If GSOS were to close, pupils and their parents/guardians feared they would be sent into other schools where few classmates shared the same training loads, commitments, or aspirations. Families explained that in such environments, young athletes often feel isolated and misunderstood for the time they must dedicate to sport. Without the peer support and understanding environment of GSOS, some parents warned that pupils could disengage – struggling to balance academic and sporting demands without recognition of their unique pressures.

⇒ *“Being around peers with likeminded goals creates motivation and resilience. Without it, pupils risk isolation and loss of drive.”*

⇒ *“My child feels part of a community at GSOS. In a mainstream school, their sporting commitments were misunderstood and ridiculed.”*

iv) Opening Pathways to National Sport, Scholarships and Sporting Careers – and the Fear of Futures Being Shut Down

Benefit

Stakeholders described GSOS as offering a pathway no other school can replicate. They emphasised the rare combination of elite coaching, specialist training, and academic flexibility which enables pupils to excel in both sport and education. Alumni successes – from winning scholarships to entering professional careers – were frequently cited as proof that GSOS opens doors to opportunities pupils could not access elsewhere.

Impact if Closed

Stakeholders emphasised that closure would dismantle pathways that have taken years to establish. The first of these is the route that enables pupils to move beyond local sport through access to expert coaches and structured competition. The second is the network of trusted relationships with universities and scholarship providers, built gradually over many years.

(Glasgow Life noted that, ‘There are no specific university pathways at present, nor have there been in the past. Performance sport assists when applying for university, but it is not driven by GSOS in terms of the link and pathway. We have assisted with contextualised university applications in the past (but this is open to all university applicants, we have simply guided) It is driven by individuals applications and achievements both academically and in their sport.’)



Above all, parents and pupils feared that the pathways young people have dedicated themselves to with relentless effort could simply be shut down, cutting off futures they have worked so hard to achieve.

- ⇒ *"GSOS opens doors- scholarships, universities, and professional pathways. Without it, those doors close."*
- ⇒ *"Children and Stakeholders all over Scotland have made sacrifices to develop their sporting careers. GSOS gives them that chance."*

v) Protecting Pupils' Mental Health and Confidence – and the Risk of Rising Anxiety and Loss of Self-Belief

Benefit

Stakeholders emphasised that GSOS supports pupils' mental health by providing an environment where their dual identity as both students and athletes is understood and celebrated. Achieving success in both arenas gives pupils pride, resilience, and self-belief. The daily rhythm of school and training within one setting also reduces stress, helping young people to feel capable and in control of demanding commitments.

Impact if Closed

If GSOS were to close, stakeholders feared significant damage to young people's mental health. They spoke of the stress and anxiety already caused by prolonged uncertainty and said closure would intensify this. Without the recognition and encouragement of GSOS environment, pupils could feel isolated and misunderstood in an educational context where few peers share the same pressures. Parents highlighted risks of low mood, loss of confidence, and burnout as pupils struggled to juggle full-time training with a standard timetable.

- ⇒ *"GSOS helps my child succeed in both sport and school, and that success has built their confidence and sense of achievement."*
- ⇒ *"Closure would have a seriously negative effect on pupils' wellbeing – increasing stress, anxiety, and loss of confidence."*

vi) Supporting Family Routines and Stability – and the Disruption Closure Would Bring

Benefit

GSOS provides pupils with stability in their daily routines. Training during school hours means children can return home at a reasonable time, complete homework, and rest properly. Parents/guardians also valued how this structure enables them to plan work, travel, and household commitments around a timetable that is sustainable for the whole family.

Impact if Closed

Closure would disrupt these carefully established routines. Pupils would face unpredictable schedules, late nights, and longer travel. Stakeholders said the knock-on effects would be significant: less family time, more stress in the household, and financial strain from extra travel and fees. For many, the fear was not just that pupils would struggle, but that the wider family would face impossible demands.



- ⇒ *"Stakeholders have adapted work, travel, and home routines to fit GSOS. Closure would disrupt this completely."*
- ⇒ *"Without GSOS, the logistics become impossible. It would affect the whole family, not just the pupil."*

vii) Ensuring Fair Access to Elite Sport - and the Fear of Talented Pupils Being Excluded

Benefit

GSOS opens opportunities based on talent, not wealth. Stakeholders described it as levelling the playing field, allowing children from *all* backgrounds to access elite coaching and facilities. Without GSOS, many said, these opportunities would simply not exist for pupils whose Stakeholders cannot afford private provision.

Impact if Closed

Closure would mean elite sport becoming increasingly accessible only to pupils with families who have significant financial means. Talented pupils from less affluent backgrounds would be excluded, regardless of potential.

- ⇒ *"The majority of children in Glasgow do not have access to top-level coaching or easy access to facilities. GSOS provided a platform regardless of financial means."*
- ⇒ *"GSOS ensures opportunities are based on talent, not wealth. Without it, only the wealthy will be able to access elite sport."*

viii) Wider Concerns: Scotland's Sporting Future

Beyond the individual impacts, many stakeholders voiced concerns about the wider consequences for Scotland's ability to develop elite athletes. GSOS is described as a crucial part of the national sporting pathway, allowing pupils to train at international standards while remaining in full-time education.

Parents argued that closure would shrink the pipeline of future talent and damage Scotland's reputation as a country that invests in sport. They pointed to the achievements of GSOS alumni as proof of its national value, warning that closure would undo this legacy and leave Scotland trailing behind other countries that continue to invest in excellence.

- ⇒ *"GSOS provided a platform for children from all backgrounds to participate at a high level. Without it, Scotland will lose future talent."*
- ⇒ *"Other specialist schools, like the Dance School of Scotland, continue to provide for young talent. Why not GSOS?"*



4. If GSOS Changes or is Closed: What Matters Most?

4.a) Introduction

As part of the survey, stakeholders were asked to consider two possible scenarios for the future of GSOS:

- If GSOS were to close before pupils complete S6.
- If GSOS were to continue but in a reduced or restructured form.

This exercise produced some clear priorities, which are presented in this chapter. At the same time, a number of stakeholders argued that the question itself missed the point: what makes GSOS distinctive is not individual elements of support, but the way development in their sport *and* education are provided *together*. This perspective is also presented at the end of the chapter.

4.b) Scenario 1 – GSOS is Reduced or Restructured

To explore what aspects of GSOS are most valued, stakeholders were asked to consider a scenario where the school might continue in a reduced or restructured form. They were invited to identify up to five elements of *existing* support they regarded as most important to retain.

Survey Question - *If Glasgow School of Sport was to continue in a different format, what would be the most important elements to keep? Please select the 5 types of support that would be of most value to you / your child.*

Response	Percentage
Access to high quality coaching	94.6%
Strength & conditioning / Physical preparation	70.3%
Alignment with education (a timetable which incorporates additional sports specific sessions with academics)	64.9%
Access to training facilities	59.5%
Sport integration with school education/curriculum	56.8%
Peer environment with other high-level athletes	56.8%
Sport physiotherapy (via Hampden Sports Clinic)	32.4%
Sport Education (Sport Leader qualification)	18.9%
Competition opportunities	16.2%
Sport psychology sessions	16.2%
Pastoral care support via Bellahouston Academy	5.4%
Nutrition advice	5.4%

Table 4 – Stakeholder Priorities for Support if GSOS Is Restructured



4.c) Scenario 2 – GSOS Closes Before Pupils Complete S6

To understand what support would be most critical if GSOS closed before pupils completed S6, stakeholders were asked to rank different types of support in order of priority. The results show not only which supports are viewed as essential, but also the relative weight placed on each. The table below summarises these priorities, with higher scores indicating stronger overall importance.

Response	Weighted Score ²
Academic flexibility	187
Access to qualified coaches	184
Affordable access to facilities	150
Strength and conditioning support	145
Funding or scholarships	132
Access to competitions	124
Other	62

Table 5 – Support Priorities in the Scenario of GSOS Closure

4.d) The Distinctive Value of GSOS as a Whole

A number of stakeholders voiced strong concerns that the survey questions, the results of which are presented in 4.b) and 4.c), missed the essence of what makes GSOS irreplaceable. For them, the value of the school lies precisely in the *integration* of academic education with sporting excellence, rather than in any single component of it.

Parents and guardians explained that while high-quality coaching, academic flexibility, and access to facilities are all important in their own right, what makes GSOS unique is that these supports are offered *together, in one coherent package*. They feared that reducing the school's future to a list of separate supports created a misleading impression that young athletes could simply access the same opportunities by piecing together services from different providers.

As one parent put it:

⇒ *"It's not just about coaching, or facilities, or timetabling. It's the fact that GSOS brings these together under one roof that makes the difference."*

Another reflected:

⇒ *"You can't replicate GSOS by ticking a few boxes. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts."*

² Weighted scores were calculated by assigning higher points to higher-priority rankings (e.g. 1st = 7 points, 2nd = 6, etc.) and summing totals across all respondents.



5. Stakeholder Perspectives on the Decision-Making Process

5.a) Introduction

The consultation process was designed to explore the benefits of GSOS, the potential impacts of closure, and the supports that stakeholders value most. A key finding was the strength of feeling about how the process has been managed and the basis on which decisions are being made. Stakeholders asked us to reflect not only their views on GSOS's future, but also their experiences of the process to date and the unanswered questions they believe remain. They stressed that leaving this out would omit crucial considerations for councillors who will read this report and make decisions about the future of GSOS.

As with every part of this report, what follows does not represent the views of Kinharvie. Our role has been to reflect, as faithfully as possible, what stakeholders told us. On this issue, their messages were clear, consistent, and often expressed with strong emotion.

This chapter is therefore presented in three parts: first, stakeholders' experiences of the process so far; second, their concerns about transparency and the information provided by Glasgow Life; and third, what they believe is needed from the rest of the process – both in the decision itself and in how it is communicated and implemented.

5.b. Stakeholders' Experience of the Process So Far

i. Impact of Prolonged Uncertainty on Pupils' Education

Stakeholders described enduring months of uncertainty about whether GSOS would remain open, be scaled back, or close. They said this ongoing uncertainty has disrupted pupils' education, particularly for those preparing for exams and competitions. It was also said to affect pupils making subject and qualification choices without knowing GSOS's future, leaving them unsure whether to plan for a sports-integrated timetable or consider transferring to another school.

⇒ *"The uncertainty has been dragging on for months, and it has been incredibly stressful for my child."*

⇒ *"We cannot plan ahead. My child does not know if they should be looking for another school or not."*

ii) Lack of Engagement

From the start of the process, pupils, parents, and guardians reported that they struggled to get clear answers about the possible closure of GSOS. Emails often went unanswered, and when replies did come, they were described as vague, inconsistent, or incomplete. Stakeholders said this gave the impression that important information was being withheld and that the outcome had already been decided.

⇒ *"The information has been drip-fed and often contradicts what we were told before."*

⇒ *"The lack of clear communication has been one of the hardest parts."*

⇒ *"We get replies that do not answer the questions asked."*



iii) Negatively Framed and Opaque Information and Consultation Sessions

Stakeholders described the consultation sessions, facilitated by Kinharvie, as framed in a way that implied closure was inevitable. Several said the tone felt defensive rather than open, and that the options under consideration were not made clear. This left some parents questioning why, if there were only two or three realistic scenarios, these were not set out from the beginning.

- ⇒ “We felt like the decision was already made and the consultation was a box-ticking exercise.”
- ⇒ “Why didn’t Glasgow Life set out clearly what the real options are? If there are only two or three, then say so.”

iv) Fairness and Equality

Stakeholders said they found clear differences in how GSOS has been treated compared with the Dance School of Scotland, the only other non-music “Centre of Excellence” within Glasgow City Council’s area. They observed that, while both schools attract pupils from across Scotland, they are managed in very different ways. Stakeholders highlighted that the Dance School of Scotland is fully managed and protected within Education Services, with all staff employed by Glasgow City Council. It continues to expand its courses and intake and offers boarding facilities. By contrast, they noted, GSOS has been placed under Glasgow Life, an external charitable body (ALEO), with staff employed separately. Stakeholders argued that this difference in management and protection is central to why one school is secure and growing, while the other is facing closure.

Building on this comparison, many stakeholders said these differences gave them the impression of unequal treatment and inconsistency in governance. Some went further and raised questions about whether this aligned with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, which identifies children as a protected group. Stakeholders particularly familiar with the Act argued that an Integrated Impact Assessment should have been carried out before any decision was made. They noted that they were not aware of such an assessment taking place and contrasted this with the protections afforded to pupils in other Centres of Excellence, such as the Dance School of Scotland.

Taken together, stakeholders argued that these issues left them questioning whether GSOS pupils were being afforded the same level of consideration and fairness as their peers in equivalent institutions.

- ⇒ “Why does the Dance School get full protection while GSOS is left to Glasgow Life? It feels unfair.”

5.c. Stakeholders’ Concerns About Transparency and Information Shared

Stakeholders consistently raised concerns about a lack of transparency in both the decision-making process and the information shared by Glasgow Life. They felt that key contextual information was either not shared at all, or provided only in ways that were partial, inconsistent, or delayed. In the absence of clarity, many said they had taken it upon themselves to make enquiries, check records, and contact organisations directly. They then shared what they discovered with others in an effort to piece together the full picture. While this collective effort provided some insights,



stakeholders emphasised that it left many critical questions unanswered and, in their view, exposed serious weaknesses in the information provided by Glasgow Life.

The subsections below set out the main points of contention and the areas where stakeholders most strongly questioned the information presented.

i) Misleading Facts Regarding the Funding of GSOS

Glasgow Life stated that GSOS was financially unsustainable, citing a figure of around £380k per year to educate non-Glasgow pupils. Stakeholders noted this claim was used as part of the justification for recommending closure but strongly dispute this figure.

They pointed out that both GSOS and the Dance School of Scotland are recognised as national Centres of Excellence. A Freedom of Information (FOI) response confirmed that the Dance School is funded through the Scottish Government's General Revenue Grant (GRG), allocated to Glasgow City Council. This funding also covers pupils from outside Glasgow, with no expectation that their home authorities contribute.

Parents and guardians assumed GSOS must be funded on the same basis. They emphasised that all secondary education and GSOS provision is financed through the Scottish Government and routed via Glasgow City Council as part of the local government settlement. They also noted that GSOS predates Glasgow Life, which only delivers the coaching and performance programme – the funding itself continues to go directly to GCC.

In this light, stakeholders said the £380k figure was misleading. They highlighted that it originated in a Committee Report withdrawn on 27 February 2025. Even that report acknowledged that GSOS's running costs were not included in the service fee paid to Glasgow Life. Stakeholders stated that no evidence has ever been provided to substantiate the '£380k per year claim'.

Stakeholders say these facts also raise another central yet unresolved question: What happens to the Centre of Excellence funding provided by the Scottish Government to GCC if it is not fully passed on to GSOS?

Stakeholders said the lack of answers raised concerns about transparency and possible mismanagement of public funds. Despite repeated requests, including at the second Information and Consultation meeting, no clear response has been provided at the time of writing.

⇒ *"If GSOS is already funded nationally, why is closure even on the table? It doesn't add up."*

ii) Inaccurate Claims About National Governing Bodies (NGBs)

Another source of anger was Glasgow Life's assertion that National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and the Scottish Institute of Sport could take over GSOS' role. Stakeholders strongly disputed this. They explained that stakeholders had contacted each of the five NGBs linked to GSOS sports, and their responses were consistent: none could replicate the integrated provision GSOS offers. Stakeholders claim the following:

- *Scottish Hockey* said they had not been involved in discussions and could not provide additional pitch time or resources for GSOS pupils.

- *Scottish Gymnastics* stated they were not able to deliver GSOS programme,



emphasising that their focus is on supporting member clubs and coaches, not replicating GSOS.

- *Scottish Swimming* highlighted that GSOS is a unique and valuable programme and could not replicate its daytime training, academic adjustments, or tailored coaching. They stressed they would like to see GSOS continue in its current format.

- *Badminton Scotland* confirmed they had not been contacted by Glasgow Life and that no equivalent pathway exists in badminton.

- *Scottish Athletics* explained that while they had been in discussions with Glasgow Life, their existing “academy” pathway only supports athletes from around age 17 who have already achieved high-performance standards. They stressed that athletics is a late-developing sport, meaning many athletes would be excluded without GSOS.

Stakeholders said these responses directly contradicted Glasgow Life’s claims and reinforced the view that GSOS offers support unmatched by any NGB or national pathway for school-age athletes.

iii) Questions About the Financial Justification for Closure

Some stakeholders drew attention to Glasgow Life’s own published accounts, which they said show the organisation operating with a healthy surplus. Against this background, they questioned why GSOS was being presented as unaffordable. For them, this raised doubts about whether closure is driven by financial necessity or by other priorities driving choices.

5.d) Implications for the Remaining Decision-Making Process

Up to this point, this chapter has described stakeholders’ experiences of how the process and information has been handled so far. This final section highlights what stakeholders feel they need from the next stages – both in the decision itself and in how it is communicated and implemented – to give them confidence in both the process and the outcome, and to feel that their perspectives have been genuinely heard and considered.

i. Ensuring Transparency

Stakeholders explained that, for them, the rest of the process needs to be transparent and clearly communicated. They said they need clarity on both the evidence being considered and the genuine options available, so they can understand how the decision is being reached. This openness, in their view, is essential for them to feel fully informed and engaged in decisions that will have wide-reaching consequences for them.

ii. Protecting Pupils from Further Uncertainty

Parents and guardians emphasised that pupils have already experienced significant uncertainty in recent months. They explained that what matters most now is how the final decision is communicated and managed. In their view, pupils need clear and timely information about what the decision means for their education, exams, and training. They believe this will help reduce anxiety and provide stability as pupils make important choices about the future of their education.



3. Considering the Wider Implications

Stakeholders also observed that the way this decision is handled will matter not only for the school but also for the wider community. Stakeholders felt that, because Scotland's only school of sport plays a unique role in nurturing young talent, any changes are likely to be noticed beyond the immediate group of pupils and families. As parents, guardians, and young people who are closely involved in sport and youth development, they felt well placed to recognise that such decisions can carry weight beyond the school itself. This is particularly relevant, they noted, with Glasgow due to host the Commonwealth Games next year, when the city's approach to sport and education will attract even greater visibility.



6. Closing Reflections

As we close and reflect on this piece of work, we are struck by the strength of feeling we have encountered throughout this process. It is a reminder of why education matters so deeply: it shapes futures, opens opportunities, and carries profound personal significance for pupils and for those who care for them. It is also this significance that makes decisions about education especially difficult, as the outcomes reach so deeply into people's lives.

Amid such strong emotions and uncertainty about the future, we are deeply grateful to the pupils, parents, and guardians who, despite their doubts, trusted us enough to share their perspectives. Our hope is that, having read this report, they recognise their own voices within it and feel reassured that their trust was well placed.

We also wish to thank the staff of Glasgow Life who worked with us at every stage to make this consultation process possible. Even when it became clear early in the information and consultation sessions that many stakeholders were angry with and critical of them, they remained committed to and enabled a process that was genuinely open to stakeholders' voices and did not seek to influence what has been included here.

This report does not attempt to draw conclusions. Its purpose has been to reflect stakeholders' perspectives as faithfully as possible and to make them available for consideration. Our hope is that it offers a constructive contribution to the decision-making process ahead and helps to keep in view those who will be most directly affected.



APPENDIX 1 – Online Survey

Introduction

Glasgow City Councillors are expected to make a decision about the future of Glasgow School of Sport (GSOS) in Autumn 2025. To help inform this decision, they are keen to hear directly from its pupils and their parents or guardians on the benefits of GSOS and the impact of its possible closure in the future.

The consultation of GSOS pupils and their parents and guardians consists of this survey as well as two in-person consultation events (these took place on 16 & 24 June) and an open email inbox which will be open until the deadline of the online survey.

This survey has 17 questions and should take around 10–15 minutes to complete. All responses will be anonymous and confidential and will be sent directly to [Kinharvie](#), an independent organisational development charity facilitating this consultation. Your individual responses will not be shared outside of Kinharvie. Kinharvie will analyse all feedback and provide a summary report highlighting key themes of the responses it has received. This will be sent to all pupils and their parents / guardians.

This online survey will be open until 5pm on Monday, 18th August. Please only make one response per pupil attending GSOS.

If you experience any technical difficulties or wish to share additional comments, please email [Kinharvie](#) directly.

Thank you for responding to this survey.

Note: Pupils or parent/guardians are being invited to complete this survey. We acknowledge that those respondents who are not the pupils may be guardians or carers rather than the parent of the pupil attending the Glasgow School of Sport. For brevity, the term "your child" is used throughout this survey to refer to the child you care for, whether you are a parent, guardian, or carer.

Q1. Please confirm, are you answering this survey as a:

- Parent, carer, or guardian of a child attending Glasgow School of Sport
- A pupil attending Glasgow School of Sport

Q2. What sport do you/does your child participate in?

- Athletics
- Gymnastics
- Hockey
- Swimming
- Badminton

Q3. What year have you/they just completed?

- S2
- S3
- S4
- S5
- S6



Q4. Overall, out of 10 how well do you think the School of Sport supports you / your child?

- **Slider:** 1 (Very Poor Support) → 10 (Excellent Support)

Q5. What have been the 3 most important benefits to you / your child of attending Glasgow School of Sport?

Open question

Q6. If Glasgow School of Sport were to close before you / your child finished S6, what impact would this have on your / your child's...

- Education
- Sporting Development
- Overall Wellbeing
- Confidence and Motivation
- Ability to Access Training or Coaching
- Routine, Finances, and/or Logistics

Response options: Very Positive / Somewhat Positive / No Impact / Somewhat Negative / Very Negative)

Qs 7-12 If you have marked 'somewhat negative' or 'very negative' please capture more about what would be the impact in the appropriate box(es) below.

7. Education
8. Sporting Development
9. Overall Wellbeing
10. Confidence and Motivation
11. Ability to Access Training or Coaching
12. Routine, finances and/or Logistics

Q13. If Glasgow School of Sport was to continue in a different format, what would be the most important elements to keep? (Select up to 5)

- Access to high-quality coaching
- Sport integration with curriculum
- Strength & conditioning / physical preparation
- Access to training facilities
- Peer environment with other high-level athletes
- Competition opportunities
- Sport psychology sessions
- Physiotherapy (via Hampden Sports Clinic)
- Alignment of sport and education timetable
- Pastoral care (via Bellahouston Academy)
- Nutrition advice
- Sport education (e.g. Sport Leader qualification)



Q14. Please explain your response to Question 13.

Open question

Q15. If Glasgow School of Sport closed before you / your child completed S6, what kind of support would you / your child need to keep progressing in their sport?

(Rank 1 = highest priority to 6/7 = lowest priority)

- Access to qualified coaches
- Strength and conditioning support
- Affordable access to facilities
- Academic flexibility
- Funding or scholarships
- Access to competitions
- Other (please specify)

Q16. In addition to the planned steps listed above, what, if any, additional steps do you think are necessary to ensure pupils and parents/guardians are appropriately engaged in the decision-making process?

Open question

Q17. Please use the space below to provide any further comments, insights, or concerns that you believe are relevant to this consultation on the future of GSOS.

Open question

Thank you for your responses.

If you have any further responses you would like to share that are relevant to the purpose of this consultation and/or questions about the consultation process Kinharvie are facilitating, please email Kinharvie no later than 5pm on Monday 18th August.



APPENDIX 2 – Editorial / Accuracy Review

i) Editorial and Consistency Issues

- Three instances of inconsistent use of terminology and role descriptions. (Pages 9 and 10 and deletion of all instances of the in front of 'Glasgow School of Sport').
- Two typographical errors. (Pages 9 and 21)

Kinharvie's response: All inconsistencies and typographical errors were corrected.

ii) Clarification and Accuracy

- Add the number of attendees at each consultation session. (Pages 3 and 8.)
- Provide a clearer explanation of Kinharvie's overall role and its role in the information and consultation sessions. (Pages 3, 6 and 19)
- Clarify the timeline prior to Kinharvie's involvement. (Pages 3, 5 and 6)
- Provide clearer descriptions of GSOS pupils' involvement in the wider school and their access to Glasgow Life sporting facilities. (Pages 3, 12 and 14)

Kinharvie's response: All requested clarifications were incorporated into the report.

iii) Nuance and Context

Four suggestions were made to add nuance and context. Three were accepted:

- Clarify that senior pupils reduce academic subjects to accommodate training. (Page 12)
- Make it clearer that GSOS supports only *five* sports. (Page 9)
- Add further context to a parent's comment suggesting GSOS improves university access through informal relationships. (Page 13)

Kinharvie's response: Three suggestions were accepted and implemented. A fourth was declined because it would have broken our boundary of neutrality, adding to the voices of GSOS pupils and parents with an opinion from Glasgow Life.