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20th April 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

**Re: Inclusion of Disabled People in Live Events
Early Reopening of Events**

We write on behalf of the disabled people we represent regarding a matter of concern to us and one which affects all of our members. We are asking you in particular to reconsider your current policy of requiring venues which are participating in your pilot scheme to re-open public events, to exclude vulnerable/disabled people from those events.

The Issues

There are 14 million people with disabilities in the UK. Most of those have non-visible disabilities.

Venues hosting events being managed by the Early Re-opening Programme (ERP) are being required to exclude, amongst others, 'vulnerable' people. As you will be aware from other communications between DRUK and Government, we do not accept the word 'vulnerable' as it applies to disabled people but we are aware that this is now a term you use to describe people with disabilities as described by section 6 of the Equality Act 2010.

In requiring venues to adopt this exclusion of 'Vulnerable'/disabled people, we believe that you are in breach of your obligations under s149 of the Equality Act 2010 to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

We are also concerned that you may be causing those hosting the events to breach the Equality Act, rendering them liable to individual claims of direct and indirect discrimination.

Disabled fan advocacy organisations such as Level Playing Field (LPF) and the Centre for Access to Football in Europe (CAFE) have both published reports setting out recommendations for the safe return of spectators to football stadiums. The recommendations issued in these reports have contributed to the Sports Grounds Safety Authority's (SGSA) social distancing guidelines which ensure that all disabled people are not classified as vulnerable within the context of returning to sport stadiums. On the premise of these publications, The London School of Economics has also published a recent study which builds upon the work of LPF and CAFE to deliver a series of recommendations that could be used by stadium operators to facilitate a disability-inclusive return.

It does not appear that the ERP has consulted with those organisations representing disabled people, and that on the evidence in the public domain there has been no consideration of the positive benefit that would accrue by including disabled people in the crowds for these pilot events – in particular equality of opportunity and the fostering of good relations.

By excluding disabled people from these events, the data will be of limited or modest value by failing to take into account that crowds attending events will inevitably include disabled people with a wide range of visible and non-visible disabilities.

Further, according to the Government's claims the 'vulnerable'/disabled community have either been vaccinated or have been offered vaccinations, meaning that the risk to them and others in allowing them to attend events is significantly less than non-disabled people permitted to attend.

What we would like you to do

For all of the above reasons, we strongly encourage you to change your policy to allow disabled people to attend the pilot events being co-ordinated by the ERP.

We should also add that we are all extremely surprised that the Government is taking such initiatives, however well meaning, without consultation with disabled people and their representative organisations.

We will be happy, at very short notice to assist including by meeting with the Government to find an improved solution.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Kamran Mallick', written in a cursive style.

Kamran Mallick, CEO Disability Rights UK