Sports Strategy consultation response

We have responded to the sections we feel are relevant to our membership and sector. Our response emphasises the need to put people first when developing the Government strategy for sport.

We are coming from the perspective of disabled people but our suggestions should benefit people across many social and economic groups. The terminology we use throughout also reflects our approach to engaging disabled people on the subject of ‘sport’ – ‘physical activity’ is the term we have found disabled people feel more comfortable with.

Co-production\(^1\) is the main theme which runs throughout the response. We believe investment in meaningful consultation and engagement with disabled people should happen through Disabled People’s User Led Organisations (DPULOs) and other organisations led by and for disabled people. We advocate the principles of co-production in any partnership we are involved in and believe this approach should be taken when planning and implementing strategies.

We also make suggestions about the need to work with health and social care leaders locally and nationally.

Theme one – Participation

*Increasing participation*

*Government would welcome views on what action could be taken - by Government, Sport England and the wider sector - to achieve a long-term, sustainable increase in sport participation in England.*

In order to increase and sustain participation for disabled people services must be responsive and co-produced. There is evidence that involving disabled people in service design from the beginning of the

\(^1\) Co-production is when you as an individual influence the support and services you receive, or when groups of people get together to influence the way that services are designed, commissioned and delivered. [http://tinyurl.com/6r8t2n](http://tinyurl.com/6r8t2n)
process leads to better outcomes for disabled people and a more responsive and therefore economic service.

**Type and measurement**

*Government would welcome views on:*

i) **Whether we should be encouraging particular types of participation.**  
*If so, Government would welcome views on:*

ii) **What these particular types of participation should be.**  
*Government would welcome views on:*

iii) **How whatever forms of participation in sport and physical activity we seek to encourage should be measured in future and how their return on investment can be proven.**

We do not have answers about what type of participation disabled people want but we know the best way to find out is to ask disabled people themselves. Consultation with potential users of services is an important part of service specification design and too often is not done in a well-planned or timely manner.

It is hard to measure a feeling but those outcomes which are harder to quantify are often those outcomes most important to service users/recipients/people. However, we do know that increased physical activity can produce a number of benefits, including increased connectedness to the community and self-activation. These outcomes in turn can have a significant effect on the level of service use, ability to get a job etc. etc.

Government and its partners need to think more flexibly about measuring participation and consider different methods to measure more qualitative data.

**Delivering results**

*Government would welcome views on how we can ensure that funding goes to those organisations which can best deliver an increase in participation.*

We believe more investment should go into organisations who have a strong membership base and/or are led by their users like DPULOs. This will help the government and Sport England understand and respond to what people want out of sport.
There may need to be investment in building relationships between local organisations and sports. Investing in these partnerships and building stronger links across sectors locally, of which membership organisations should be a part, is key to increasing participation.

**Under-represented groups**

*Government would welcome views on how to address the participation challenge in under-represented groups and in particular where maximum value for money can be found in delivering long-term, sustainable change.*

Again, we believe there should be investment in memberships or user led organisations who represent these groups in the community. Investing in people rather than a particular type of sport is where you will find routes to engaging with under-represented groups.

**New sports**

*Government would welcome views on how we can best support participation in new sports and activities, along with new and more flexible formats of traditional sports.*

In our experience many disabled people are put off doing physical activity by the images conjured up by the word ‘sport’. There are many groups including disabled people that have different motivations for taking part in physical activity aside from the often invoked physical health benefits. Different opportunities for physical activity, which exist outside the list of recognised sports, could be explored and developed based on this evidence.

**Sport for social good**

*Government would welcome views on how we can best join together the relevant organisations and government departments to realise the positive social outcomes which sport can deliver, and whether government funding should be directed to achieve particular social outcomes.*

Government needs to rely heavily on insight about what motivates people to take part in sport. Investment should be guided by what outcomes you want to see as a result of the activity, rather than increased participation in a particular activity.
Government could work across departments to better understand how partnerships across health, social care and sport can work together locally to achieve better outcomes for people, and how these outcomes can be shared across departments. It is as important to work with the voluntary, not for profit and private sectors. These sectors and departments will have their own insights into the ways sport can benefit people.

**Theme two – Physical activity**

*Getting more people active, more often*

*Government would welcome views on how sport can specifically address the number of people who are physically inactive.*

Marketing needs to be inclusive of disabled people and relating to what motivates people to engage in physical activity. Again, there is very useful insight into this from EFDS and others.

Many people need support to access physical activity, whether it be getting to the session or during the session. Investment in sport needs to account for this section of consumers and target the marketing accordingly.

There are many people who physically can’t get to sessions because of where they live, their impairment or both. Government needs to find ways to invest in opportunities for rural communities and those who struggle to travel independently to get active e.g. think about funding options for the transport to get to activities as well as the activities themselves.

Also, draw on existing community opportunities which people already access to find ways to develop better, more responsive options for physical activity and sport.

*Physical health*

*Government would welcome views on how sport and physical activity can play a more significant and effective role as part of a wider strategy to combat obesity, diabetes and other physical health conditions.*
Government could take action to align sports sector priorities with Public Health and to scope out existing initiatives which are already seeing positive outcomes.

There needs to be better links across health, social care and sport nationally and locally. Local Health and Wellbeing Boards should include sports and leisure as legitimate partners in developing local strategies. However, this needs to be translated into action on the frontline level between sport providers and health and social care professionals.

There also need to be links with local and national organisations from the voluntary and community sector who are leading change in improving health outcomes. For example, social prescribing is an approach being increasingly replicated across the country.

**Health and sport professionals**

*Government would welcome views on how best health and other professionals can work together to raise awareness of the benefits of physical activity.*

Again, professionals in health and social care need to work with the community to explore ways to raise awareness. Public Health have a big part to play in developing new models of practice and this should be based on evidence which comes from the community.

Physical activity and sport should be seen as a significant route to prevention of physical and mental health issues such as heart disease and dementia. This should be considered when partnerships are being built locally across commissioning and service delivery.

Government needs to work with DPULOs to help understand how new initiatives are working locally.

**Theme Eight – Fairness and Equality**

**Discrimination**

*Government would welcome views on what we can do to ensure our sporting culture allows everyone to take part and succeed, and addresses all forms of intolerance, whether a result of active discrimination or unconscious bias.*
Inclusiveness needs to be central to any sport provider’s strategy and the whole workforce should have training and development opportunities around working with certain groups.

Recruitment practices within sport need to be open to all sections of society. As employees, disabled people will be able to support providers with understanding some of the barriers to participation.

Government needs to draw on support for specialist organisations in discrimination in its many different forms.

**Disabled people**

*Government would welcome views on how to enable a much greater proportion of disabled people to take part in sport and physical activity, including as volunteers and paid employees.*

Please see the EFDS Charter for Change which outlines the changes the sector needs to make to be more inclusive of disabled people.

If government is to better engage disabled people in sport, we should be involved in design and delivery of services and initiatives.

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