



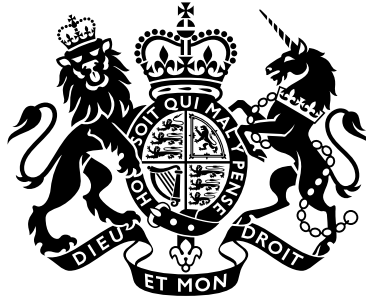
Department
for Culture,
Media & Sport

Get Active:

A strategy for the future of sport and
physical activity

August 2023





Get Active:

A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity

Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport by Command of His Majesty

August 2023



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Ministerial foreword



Millions of people across the country play, watch and enjoy sport every day – it is central to our national identity. We all know that being active and playing sport has the power to change lives for the better. Quite simply, an active life is a happier, healthier and more prosperous life.

Sport is also one of our country's biggest assets. We continue to punch well above our weight internationally, have some of the best, most vibrant sports clubs in the world, and we are world leaders in hosting major sporting events, from the Women's Euros to the Commonwealth Games.

However, recent years have seen unprecedented challenges for sport and our ability to be active. The pandemic and ongoing financial challenges around the cost of living have had a huge effect on all of us, including on the sport and physical activity sector and its workforce.

This strategy sets out how we will respond to these challenges, to ensure that the sport and physical activity sector remains vibrant and relevant in the years to come. It builds on the strong foundations we already have in this country, and sets out how we, as government and the wider sector, can come together to tackle today's challenges and make the most of future opportunities.

My ambitions are to make it easier for people to get physically active, and ensure the sport sector can thrive in the years ahead. To achieve this we need to be unapologetically ambitious, and that is why by 2030 we want to see 2.5 million more adults and 1 million more children being classed as active in England.

Government can set the ambition, but we need individuals to respond. And to achieve that it requires us all to come together to provide system-wide support. This includes ensuring there is join-up between communities, schools and local healthcare systems to deliver opportunities to get active for all. If we get this early intervention right, our work can help reduce the burden on the NHS, whilst also levelling-up opportunities for sport and participation across the nation.

Our priority is also ensuring sport is as safe as possible for those who do participate. Wherever sport is played, we want people to feel safe, secure and supported. This strategy will help us to make sure that is always the case.

This strategy focuses on the areas where government intervention is particularly needed, and shines a light on where the sector can do more. I want to create the right environment to allow the sector to flourish, so that it can play a crucial role in creating a more prosperous, happier and healthier country. That means public funding reaching those who need it most, a successful school sport system, facilities where communities need them, and ongoing reform to ensure sport and physical activity continues to thrive and is fit for the future.

Our job now is to ensure that the benefits of sport and physical activity are within reach of everyone in the country. I look forward to working with the sector, and with national and local partners, to make these ambitions a reality.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lucy Frazer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rt Hon Lucy Frazer KC MP

Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

Executive summary

The government wants to help build a healthier nation by tackling high levels of inactivity, and by making sure that the sport and physical activity sector thrives for future generations. This strategy sets out how the government will work with the sector to achieve these aims by ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to be active. Central to this will be a focus on establishing a lifetime habit of being physically active amongst children and young people, including playing sport, supporting the sector to be welcoming to all, and ensuring the sector is prepared for both future challenges and opportunities. Whoever you are, or wherever you live there should be good facilities, a strong network of sports clubs that are open to you, great sport and physical activity opportunities in schools, and confidence in sport and the sector. This strategy sets out a blueprint to make that a reality.

The government cannot deliver the changes needed alone, so we will work alongside the sector to deliver this vision. This strategy is a call to organisations across the country which deliver sport and physical activity to go further on the challenge of building a happier, healthier and more active nation. This is especially the case as we come out of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and experience challenging economic circumstances. This doesn't just include traditional sports clubs, schools and other public sector organisations but also private sector businesses, the outdoor activity sector and organisations with a core objective of getting the nation more active.

The outcomes of being more active are well known – now is the time to shout about them and to embed activity at the heart of government policy. The more active we are, the healthier we become both physically and mentally, the stronger our communities, and the more prosperous our society. Great work has been done by so many groups, but we now need to go even further to ensure everyone feels this benefit. This strategy sets out the framework for the government and the sport world to do exactly that.

The 3 core priorities of this strategy, and what it means for the country, are:

1. Being unapologetically ambitious in making the nation more active, whether in government or in the sport sector:

- **Ensuring everyone is focused on increasing physical activity, meaning fewer inactive children, and narrowing the gap on inactivity where groups are not being reached, with visible progress across the country by 2030.** This will mean:
 - A new cross-government approach for activity for all, with clear metrics and targets for the sector, held to account by a joint government and sector National Physical Activity Taskforce.
 - More investment in the sector is targeted at inactive groups, and a more strategic approach to facilities to ensure communities have access to the facilities they need. If you are inactive, this will increase the likelihood that there is a way into sport or physical activity for you in your local area.
 - A focus on all children meeting the activity levels recommended by the UK's Chief Medical Officers, supported by a new campaign aimed at children and young people, and it will build on the update to the School Sport and Activity Action Plan to ensure children have the best chance for an active life.

- **Focusing on evidence, data and metrics** to understand how interventions are helping get people active and demonstrate their value. This will include a new evidence-based measure of success to allow us to make the case for future investment around preventative health as the long-term vision for tackling inactivity. We will expect all organisations to be able to account for how they are addressing our ambitions on inactivity.
- **Setting the future direction for facilities and spaces where people can be active**, by delivering multi-million pound investment into grassroots facilities and setting a clear strategic ambition for the future. This will mean facilities that reflect the needs of local communities, supported by hundreds of millions of pounds of government and local authority investment.

2. Making sport and physical activity more inclusive and welcoming for all so that everyone can have confidence that there is a place for them in sport.

- **Helping the sector to be welcoming to all**, by promoting women's and disability sport, championing diversity across the sector and holding the sector to account for investing in these groups. We want to help everyone to get active, and support our most talented athletes realise their full potential, regardless of background or location. This will mean groups feel the benefit of public and private investment, that we see meaningful progress by 2030, and that cultural issues which put people off sport are relentlessly tackled.
- **Improving how issues and concerns are dealt with in the sector**, starting by launching a call for evidence around sport integrity issues. This will increase confidence in sport so that everyone knows that their welfare is at the heart of the sport system, whatever sport they play.



3. Moving towards a more sustainable sector that is more financially resilient and robust.

- **Supporting the sector to access additional, alternative forms of investment** to help it continue to grow and thrive, and by highlighting best practice, good governance mechanisms, and opportunities offered by technology and innovation. This will allow sport to thrive for future generations, and support the continuation of our sporting institutions.
- **Working towards a more environmentally sustainable sector** that delivers on the government's net-zero ambitions. We will do this by championing the role that sport can play in sustainability, and bringing together government departments, the sport sector and subject matter experts to share information and provide support.

Delivering against these priorities will help create a more active nation and a more sustainable sport sector. These aims are complementary; greater participation, stronger governance and confidence in the sector will help to drive investment, which in turn helps to attract new audiences. Our vision is to make sport and physical activity accessible, resilient, fun and fair, for now and the years to come – for the benefit of individuals and the country.

Building on strong foundations

The 2015 government sport strategy, *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for a More Active Nation*, was a fundamental re-framing of sport and physical activity in the UK. It set out five outcomes delivered by sport and physical activity:

- physical wellbeing
- mental wellbeing
- individual development
- social and community development
- sustainable economic development

This new strategy builds on the foundations of *Sporting Future*, and retains these five outcomes at its core.

Progress since *Sporting Future*

Participating, volunteering and watching live sport

- **Seeing the full scope of activity:** the government and Sport England broadened the focus from a narrow definition of formal sport to include more types of physical activity. Sport England's remit also expanded to include children from age 5 and above.
- **New, more accurate measurement:** Sport England introduced the Active Lives Survey, and the Active Lives Children and Young People Survey, to provide world-leading data and insight into activity levels and behaviours. The focus shifted to how many people are meeting the Chief Medical Officers' recommended levels of activity (150 mins per week for adults), rather than reporting on which sports were most popular.
- **Focus on the least active:** attention and investment was directed at those who faced the biggest barriers to getting active. Sport England's Local Delivery Pilots focused on areas of need around the country. Its pioneering '*This Girl Can*' and '*We Are Undefeatable*' campaigns aimed to address practical and social barriers for women and girls and people living with long-term health conditions, respectively.
- **Helping reduce inactivity:** in the years before the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of inactive people was in steady decline, and the participation gap between men and women had started to narrow. COVID-19 impacted participation rates and set back some of the progress made, but this progress has now been restored.

Progress since *Sporting Future*

Maximising sporting success and the impact of major events

- **Success on the biggest stages:** Team GB and ParalympicsGB finished in the top four of the medals tables for the summer Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020. There was further success at the PyeongChang 2018 and Beijing 2022 Winter Games. Outside the Olympics and Paralympics, we have seen home nation victories in the 2022 UEFA European Women's Football Championships (Women's Euro 2022), the 2017 ICC Women's Cricket World Cup and the 2019 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup, as well as strong medal success at our home event, the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.
- **Hosting major events:** of the 110 individuals who won medals for Team GB and Northern Ireland at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, 56 had competed at UK Sport-funded events. Major events also deliver more widely on government and sporting priorities, as seen at the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games, the UEFA 2022 Women's European Championships and the 2021 Rugby League World Cup, amongst many other major events. A UK Sport report found that these 2022 sporting events (excluding the Commonwealth Games) had an economic impact of £132 million, supported 1,600 jobs and had a 6:1 return on investment. The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games interim evaluation estimates that the event delivered £870.7 million of economic benefits and 7,400 additional jobs. The UEFA Women's European Championships had the highest attended Euros final ever (men's or women's) and a global live viewership of 365 million across 195 territories.



A responsible, resilient and productive sector

- **A focus on welfare:** Baroness Grey-Thompson’s Duty of Care in Sport report led to increased support for safeguarding and welfare, including an extension of the positions of trust legislation to include sports coaches, independent complaints investigation for National Governing Bodies (NGBs), and mental health resources for sports.
- **Financial support during the COVID-19 pandemic:** the delay in readmission of spectators to live sporting events, caused by COVID-19 restrictions in the UK, put sports clubs, organisations and leagues across the country in jeopardy. Government provided critical financial support through the Sport Survival Package to ensure as many sports or sports clubs as possible survived the period of COVID-19 restrictions. This support also sought to minimise the long-term damage to participation through safeguarding investment into grassroots community activity and women’s sport. It provided over £264 million to more than 1,685 organisations across 15 sports, from football to horse racing, ensuring their survival through the pandemic. A further £100 million was also made available for leisure centres through the National Leisure Recovery Fund.
- **A level playing field:** the UK signed the Council of Europe “Macolin” Convention on the Manipulation of Sporting Competitions, and has been a driving force in the International Partnership Against Corruption in Sport (IPACS). Following a review, UK Anti-Doping’s budget was significantly increased, and the National Anti-Doping Policy was revised in line with the latest World Anti-Doping Code.

Physical and mental wellbeing



Every **£1** spent on **sport** and **physical activity** generates almost **£4** in return across health and wellbeing, strengthening communities and the national economy.¹

The health benefits of sport and physical activity are well known. Active people live healthier, longer and happier lives, with physical activity reducing the risk of disease, helping to support individuals to maintain a healthier weight, and giving wide-ranging musculoskeletal health benefits. It also has a significant role to play in helping prevent and manage many long-term health conditions. Getting active at a young age also aids the healthy development and function of muscles, bones and the cardio-respiratory system.

Reducing the number of inactive children and adults reduces the burden on the NHS. Every year, active lifestyles prevent 900,000 cases of diabetes and 93,000 cases of dementia (the leading cause of death in the UK). This delivers a combined saving of £7.1 billion to the UK economy.²

1 https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/measuring-impact?section=social_and_economic_value_of_community_sport

2 <https://www.sportengland.org/about-us/uniting-movement/why-moving-matters>

Musculoskeletal hubs in the community

Good Boost, UK Active, Orthopaedic Research UK, ESCAPE-pain, and Arthritis Action have joined forces to design a system-based approach to better integrate leisure facilities within the nation's healthcare infrastructure. This project turns leisure facilities into a locally accessible network of community 'musculoskeletal (MSK) hubs', supported by UK Research and Innovation funding.

The project will test the delivery of affordable personalised services for exercise, rehabilitation, wider wellbeing support and education. The aim is to reduce health disparities by providing local, supported, self-management options for people to better maintain mobility and physical function, and reduce pain, through exercise.

Where successful, the project learnings and model have the potential to be scaled up across the UK's leisure centres to roll-out standardised supported-self management options for other long-term health conditions, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. This could play a key role in reducing the burden on the NHS and supporting individuals to manage their own health.

By creating a blueprint for transformation, the consortium hopes to enable any leisure centre or community facility to integrate services to support older adults in maintaining and improving their health and wellbeing.



The mental health of the nation is also crucial. Being active and playing sport can lead to greater self-esteem, reduced anxiety and increased confidence. Active lifestyles are associated with 30 million fewer GP visits and 375,000 fewer people being diagnosed with depression, which helps to reduce absenteeism and thus increase productivity at work.³

Increasing levels of physical activity will also help to deliver on the important health, wellbeing and missions set out in the Levelling Up white paper, helping to bridge the gap in life expectancy across the country, as well as supporting an improvement in perceived wellbeing levels.⁴

3 <https://www.sportengland.org/about-us/uniting-movement>

4 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>

Individual, social and community development

As set out in the Sport for Development Coalition's Open Goal framework, the benefits of building an active society extend far beyond just physical and mental wellbeing.⁵ Having an active population helps to create connected communities, reduce anti-social behaviour and increase employability by creating highly productive individuals. Sport has an incredible ability to reach into the places we live, reduce loneliness and build a sense of pride in place and belonging.⁶

Those who engage in sport and physical activity are less likely to feel lonely than those who are inactive.⁷ Local sports clubs and activity groups are community hubs; places where people of different ages and backgrounds, who may otherwise never meet, come together through a shared passion. The economic value of this community-building and social trust has been estimated at over £14 billion.⁸

Much of this benefit is only possible thanks to a dedicated and highly skilled workforce, including people who volunteer their time to make sport and physical activity happen in their neighbourhoods. Sport accounts for over 50% of all volunteering in the UK, and one volunteer creates the capacity for at least 8.5 more people to participate.⁹ Those individuals who volunteer their time can directly benefit from improved mental wellbeing and increased connections, through making friends and developing greater pride of place. Being involved in the physical activity community can give individuals a sense of purpose and belonging, helping to address loneliness and feelings of isolation.

Parkrun

Parkrun stands as an exemplar in the participation landscape – a free weekly service which offers people from all walks of life and of all different standards to come together to either run or walk 5km. It is free to enter, with private sponsors and partners helping to fund the equipment needed to make the course safe, and provide an official finishing time to each participant.

At Parkrun, volunteers form the backbone of the organisation, with their encouragement and welcoming nature being a key factor in ensuring people return week after week. The system works because volunteers can give up their time on their own terms, and are given small manageable tasks which are accessible and inclusive. For those who volunteer, it is its own and equal form of participation, delivering a multitude of social and health benefits.

5 <https://www.sportfordevelopmentcoalition.org/open-goal-framework>

6 https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/measuring-impact?section=social_and_economic_value_of_community_sport

7 <https://www.sportengland.org/research-and-data/data/active-lives>

8 https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/measuring-impact?section=social_and_economic_value_of_community_sport

9 <https://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/pages/volunteering-research>



There is also growing evidence to show that sports programmes can have a high impact on keeping individuals safe from involvement in crime and violence.¹⁰ Sport's primary role is at an early intervention and prevention stage. If delivered in the right way, it can provide a unique opportunity to support young people with additional vulnerabilities to engage in positive, pro-social opportunities, such as volunteering. This may contribute to reduced risk of their involvement in criminal activity. We would welcome academics and practitioners joining together to share experiences of the role of sport in community safety and criminal justice, to ensure there is robust evidence to support interventions in this area.

Youth Justice Sport Fund

The Youth Justice Sport Fund was an example of government investment in the early intervention potential of youth work through sport to improve outcomes for young people, delivering on commitments made within the 2021 Beating Crime Plan and Prisons Strategy white paper. This £5 million investment by the Ministry of Justice directly supported over 200 expert voluntary and community sector organisations to deliver impactful projects with young people aged 10 to 17 across England and Wales.

The fund aimed to increase the future capability of the sport sector to use youth work to achieve positive outcomes for young people. It also enabled the sector to work more effectively with local youth justice partners, such as Youth Offending Teams and Violence Reduction Units, by investing in sector-building activity that focused on harnessing sustainable, long-term relationships.

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) also supports the shared vision for the role of sports-based interventions in tackling and reducing crime, and preventing contact with the criminal justice system. Physical Education departments across the youth and adult estate effectively support both adults and children who have offended, engaging them in a variety of sports and physical activities to not just improve physical and mental health, but work to tackle health disparities and reduce re-offending. HMPPS is working with cross-government and third-sector partners to strengthen links which will support the transition from custody into community, and for those that serve sentences in the community to be able to access the services and opportunities available within their local area.

10 <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/sports-programmes/>

Economic development

There are clear economic benefits to having an active population. For individuals, there is a link between being active and improved job opportunities; this applies to people from all backgrounds, including young people not in education, employment or training.¹¹ From a young age, being involved in sport and physical activity equips us with essential life skills, such as self-control, teamwork, conflict resolution and leadership, helping to provide a valuable contribution to the education mission set out in the Levelling Up white paper.¹²

We also know that if you are physically active, you're more likely to see improved academic performance and to earn more as an adult.¹³ Those who have spent a sustained period of time out of the workforce also find it easier to return to work if they are physically active.

Looking beyond individuals, the sport sector is an important growth sector, contributing £39 billion a year to the UK economy. From 2003 to 2017, the sector saw employment growth of 42%, with 129,000 new jobs created.

The five fundamental outcomes and benefits that being physically active delivers mean that it is only right that the government is proactive in driving the ambition for a more active society, specifically tackling levels of inactivity.



11 <https://www.sportfordevelopmentcoalition.org/active-employment>

12 https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/measuring-impact?section=social_and_economic_value_of_community_sport

13 https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/measuring-impact?section=social_and_economic_value_of_community_sport

Terminology

Sport's arm's length bodies

There are four organisations known as 'arm's length bodies' (executive non-departmental bodies) dedicated to sport, all sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS):

Sport England

Sport England invests funding from the government and National Lottery to help people and communities across the country adopt a sporting habit for life, and increase participation levels in sport and physical activity. It also protects existing sports provision and must be consulted on any planning applications that affect playing fields in England.

The government works with Sport England to deliver the ambitions set out in its strategy, *Uniting the Movement*.¹⁴ The strategy focuses on 5 pillars:

- recovering and reinventing from the COVID-19 pandemic
- connecting communities
- positive experiences for children and young people
- connecting with health
- active environments

UK Sport

UK Sport is the nation's high-performance sports agency. UK Sport invests funding from the government and the National Lottery into the UK's elite athletes, teams, sports and events to achieve success. UK Sport's 2021-2031 strategy "Powering Success Inspiring Impact" is underpinned by three core ambitions:¹⁵

- keep winning and win well
- grow a thriving sporting system
- inspire positive change

UK Anti-Doping (UKAD)

UKAD is the UK's national anti-doping organisation. It works with athletes and national sports bodies to promote clean sport and ensure compliance with the World Anti-Doping Code, primarily through implementing the government's National Anti-Doping Policy.

Its functions include an education and information programme, athlete testing across more than 40 Olympic, Paralympic and professional sports, intelligence management, and exclusive results management authority for the determination of anti-doping rule violations.

14 <https://www.sportengland.org/about-us/uniting-movement>

15 <https://www.uk sport.gov.uk/about-us/strategic-plan>

Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA)

The SGSA is the UK Government’s world-leading expert advisory and regulatory body on safety at sports grounds.

It provides independent, expert advice, based on nearly three decades of experience in making football in England and Wales a safe and enjoyable experience for spectators through licensing stadia and setting globally recognised standards. The SGSA uses its experience to advise and support other sports and related industries in the UK and internationally.

Other organisations

Active Partnerships

The Active Partnerships network is an association of nationwide sport and physical activity organisations that exists to create a healthier, fairer nation. Active Partnerships take a place-based approach to reducing disparities through a network of 43 local and independent non-profit organisations. They partner with local and national stakeholders to transform lives through physical activity and sport and affect widespread social change. Active Partnerships are supported and funded by Sport England, through £1.5 million of government and National Lottery funding to co-deliver the ambitions of its 10-year Uniting the Movement strategy.

A note on language

In this strategy we have taken care to distinguish between the terms “sport” and “physical activity”.

In talking about participation, we often refer to sport and physical activity together, because our main aim is to ensure the nation is as active as possible, with individuals choosing whatever form of activity that suits them best.

In other cases we have deliberately chosen to refer to “the sport sector”, meaning organised sporting activity, given this delivers a specific value to the country and individuals.

We refer to the following definitions in the strategy:

The National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC)

- Most affluent (NS-SEC 1-2): Managerial, administrative and professional occupations (e.g. doctor, actor, journalist).
- Mid-affluent (NS-SEC 3-5): Intermediate, lower supervisory and technical occupations; self-employed and small employers (e.g. secretary, plumber, train driver).
- Least affluent (NS-SEC 6-8): Semiroutine and routine occupations; long term unemployed or never worked (e.g. bus driver).

Index of Multiple Deprivation

- The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is a measure of relative deprivation for small areas (Lower Super Output Areas, or LSOAs). It is a combined measure of deprivation based on 37 separate indicators, each of which reflects a different aspect of deprivation experienced by the individuals living in an area.

Chapter 1:

Driving participation and addressing inactivity



Chapter 1:

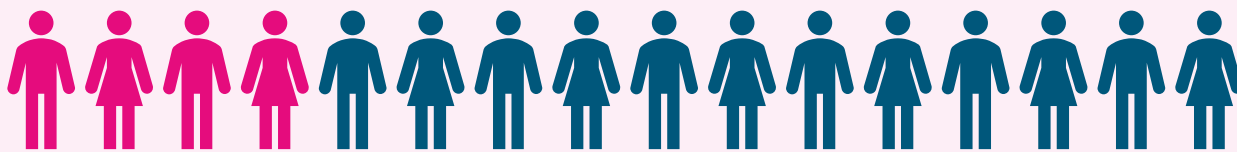
Driving participation and addressing inactivity

SUMMARY

Our aim is to be unapologetically ambitious in making the nation more active, whether in government or in the wider sport and physical activity sector. It benefits an individual's physical and mental health, as well as fostering community cohesion. Together we will work on:

- **Ensuring everyone is focused on increasing physical activity, meaning fewer inactive children, and narrowing the gap on inactivity where groups are not being reached, with visible progress across the country by 2030. This will mean:**
 - A new cross-government approach for activity for all, with clear metrics and targets for the sector, held to account by a joint government and sector National Physical Activity Taskforce.
 - More investment in the sector is targeted at inactive groups, and a more strategic approach to facilities to ensure communities have access to the facilities they need. If you are inactive, this will increase the likelihood that there is a way into sport or physical activity for you in your local area.
 - A focus on all children to meet the activity levels recommended by the UK's Chief Medical Officers, supported by a new campaign aimed at children and young people, and it will build on the update to the School Sport and Activity Action Plan to ensure children have the best chance for an active life.
- **Focusing on evidence, data and metrics** to understand how interventions are helping get people active and demonstrate their value. This will include a new evidence-based measure of success to allow us to make the case for future investment around the five outcomes of sport and physical activity, as well as how it helps our long-term vision for tackling inactivity. We will expect all organisations to be able to account for how they are addressing our ambitions on inactivity.
- **Setting the future direction for facilities and spaces where people can be active** by delivering multi-million pound investment into grassroots facilities and setting a clear strategic ambition for the future. This will mean facilities that reflect the needs of local communities, supported by hundreds of millions of pounds of government and local authority investment.

Introduction



Over a **quarter** of adults in **England** are classed as inactive, so average **less** than 5 minutes of activity a day.¹⁶

There has never been a more important time for us to encourage people to embrace sport and physical activity. It is central to our ambition to cut NHS waiting lists and ensure the nation recovers from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The case for a more active society has been proved. It provides considerable mental and physical health benefits, as well as aiding community cohesion and development. Now is the time to focus on making that a reality, and to enable everyone to get active.

Levels of inactivity have remained stubbornly high over the last few years, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, 25.8% of the adult population in England is classed as inactive. That means that 11.9 million people do an average of less than 30 minutes of physical activity a week.¹⁷ A concerning number of children also fail to meet the recommended amount of daily exercise. These levels of inactivity are a factor in the increasing pressure on our health and social care system. This needs to change.

There are significant reasons and barriers for why people aren't active. These range from motivation and perceived capability, to the lack of facilities or time. More action is required to reverse the status quo and help people in this situation. Over the past few years we have come a long way towards understanding these barriers, and Sport England's strategy, *Uniting the Movement*, sets out its plan for addressing them.

We now need to help embed the importance of physical activity throughout people's lives, particularly children, for example by facilitating active travel or helping to make local sports clubs more accessible. It also means looking beyond the traditional role of sport and physical activity in society, and recognising how the sector can support wider societal outcomes, as well as the health and social care system.

As government, our focus must be on helping those who have the most to gain from getting active. That means concentrating on the groups which are the least likely to be active, and setting that expectation for the sector as well. Through this we can demonstrate the long-term health benefits of sport, which allows for a greater focus on preventative health. To do this, we must ensure support is targeted to help make the biggest difference, and then hold ourselves to account for the investments made. We must build on where we have been successful, but not be afraid to go further and challenge where more action is needed.

16 <https://www.sportengland.org/research-and-data/data/active-lives>

17 <https://www.sportengland.org/news/sport-and-physical-activity-must-be-used-level-and-tackle-inequalities>

This chapter will set out our ambition to tackle inactivity across society. It will outline the benefits of being active and how sport plays an incredibly important role. **Fundamental to this is setting a clear ambition to be unapologetically ambitious in making the nation more active**, by:

- Ensuring everyone is focused on increasing physical activity, meaning fewer inactive children, and narrowing the gap on inactivity where groups are not being reached – with visible progress across the country by 2030.
- Focusing on evidence, data and metrics to understand how interventions are helping get people active, and demonstrate their value.
- Setting the future direction for facilities and spaces where people can be active, so that facilities reflect the needs of local communities, supported by hundreds of millions of pounds of government and local authority investment.



Activity levels

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines

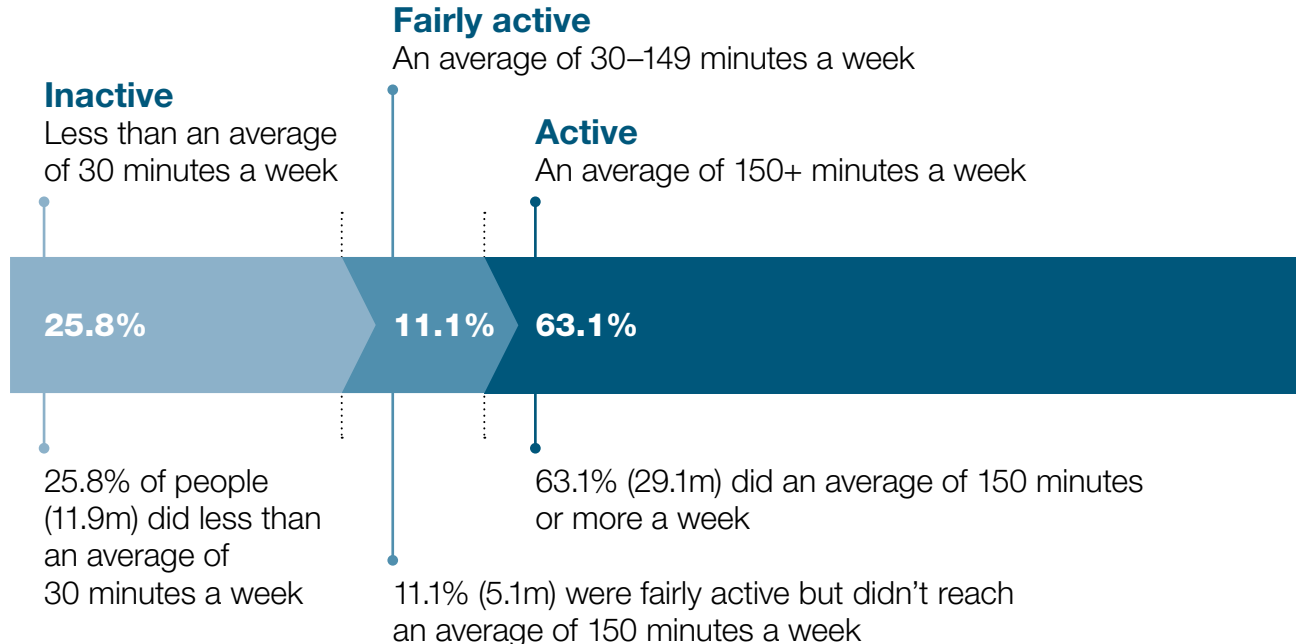
The UK Chief Medical Officers' guidelines provide evidence-based recommendations for physical activity levels at different ages. The recommendations are set out below, alongside recent data on activity levels from the Active Lives Survey.

Adults

- All adults should do a minimum of 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity exercise a week – for example, brisk walking or riding a bike.
- Adults should do activities to develop and maintain muscle strength at least twice a week. These activities could include heavy gardening, carrying heavy shopping, or resistance exercise.
- Adults should aim to minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary.

Current Activity Rates (Active Lives Survey, Academic Year 2021-22)

Adults



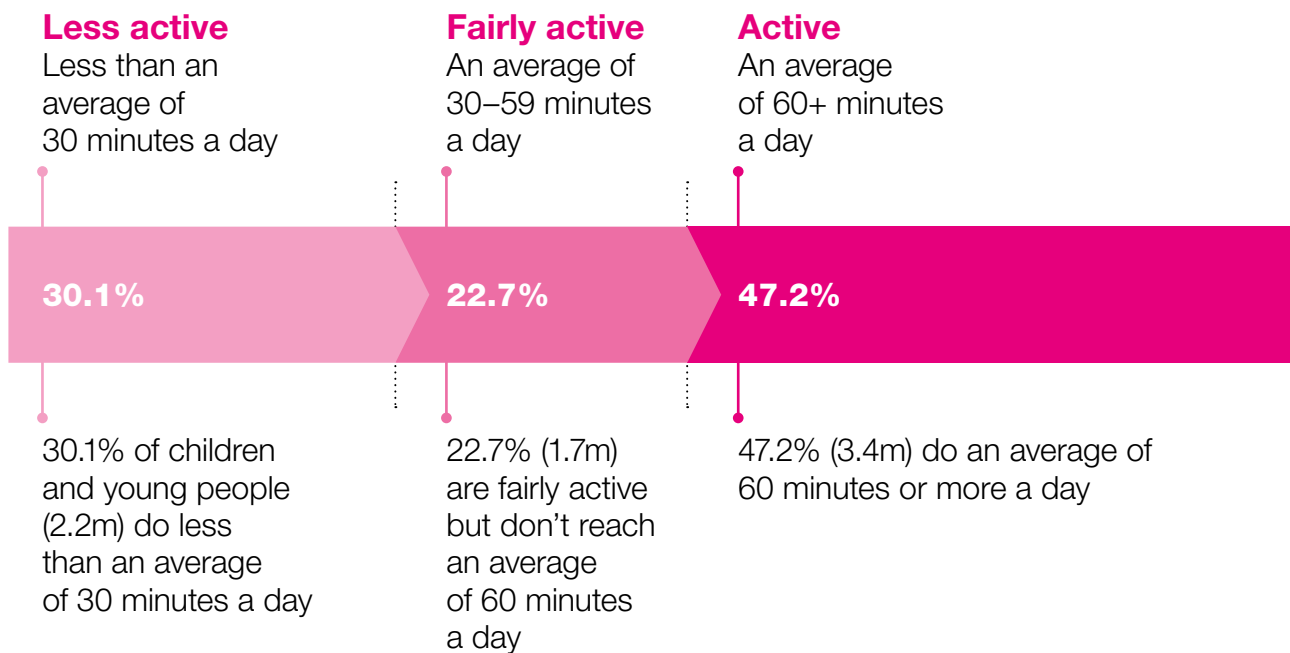
Activity levels

Children

- Children should take part in sport and physical activity for an average of 60 minutes or more every day.
- Disabled children should undertake an average of 20 minutes every day.¹⁸

Current Activity Rates (Active Lives Survey 2021-2022)

Children



18 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-uk-chief-medical-officers-report>

1.1 Tackling disparities in participation levels

As set out in our vision, the government wants specific action to close the gaps in activity levels that have persisted for far too long.

Whilst activity rates at a population level have now recovered to pre-pandemic levels, it is concerning that the disparities in participation between certain groups have continued to widen. Lower activity levels are reported for women, those aged 75 and over, disabled people, people with long-term health conditions, and for some ethnic groups. These disparities in activity levels must now be addressed. It is not right that certain groups are being left behind and not able to experience the positive power of sport in their lives.

The variance in levels of physical activity also has a geographical dimension, and this government is committed to addressing previous imbalances in funding allocations to ensure that everyone has equal opportunity to get physically active.

As government, it is our responsibility to be clear that our focus on sport policy is to tackle the disparities in activity, and then be joined-up in our messaging to create the conditions for change. It is then up to the sector to come together and help make that change. This involves identifying the methods that work to tackle these divides, and being willing to go further to ensure that we are making a difference.

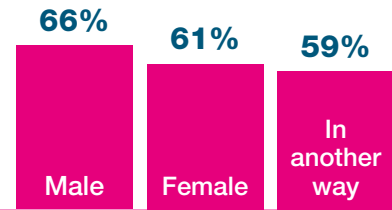
This is why we are introducing a national ambition to increase activity rates and decrease rates of inactivity, as defined by the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines.



Active Lives Survey (2021–2022)

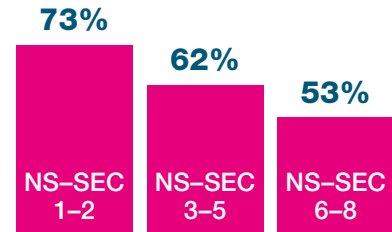
1 Gender

Men (66% or 14.7m) are more likely to be active than women (61% or 14.2m) and those who describe themselves in another way (59% or 0.2m).



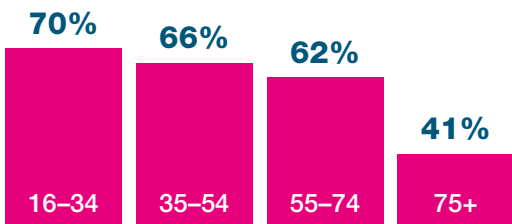
2 Socio-economic groups*

People from NS-SEC 6-8 are the least likely to be active



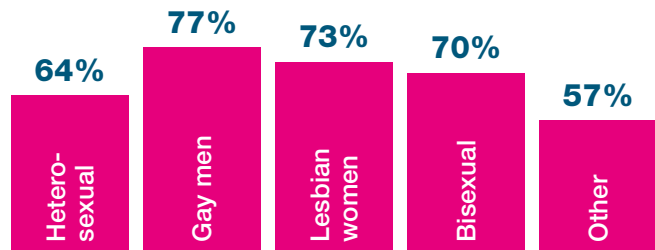
3 Age

Activity levels generally decrease with age, with the sharpest decrease coming at age 75+ (to 41%).



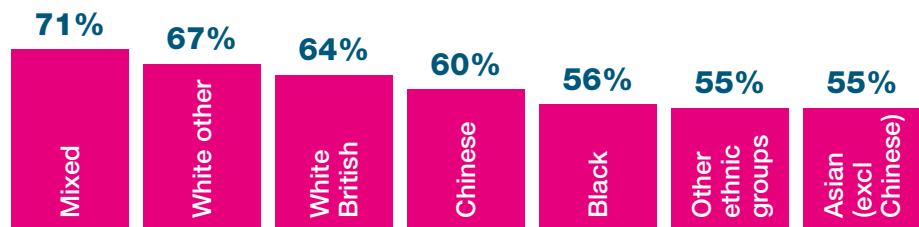
4 Sexual orientation

Gay men, lesbian women and bisexual adults are all more likely to be active than heterosexual adults.



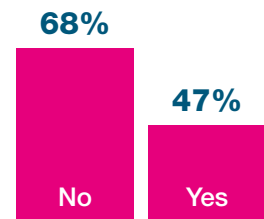
5 Ethnicity

There are differences in activity levels based on ethnic background.



6 Disability and long-term health conditions**

Activity is less common for adults with a disability or long-term health condition (47%) than those without (68%).



* Credit: Active Lives survey 2021-22

NS-SEC Group definitions:

- Most affluent (NS-SEC 1-2): Managerial, administrative and professional occupations (e.g. doctor, actor, journalist).
- Mid-affluent (NS-SEC 3-5): Intermediate, lower supervisory and technical occupations; self-employed and small employers (e.g. secretary, plumber, train driver).
- Least affluent (NS-SEC 6-8): Semiroutine and routine occupations; long term unemployed or never worked (e.g. bus driver).

** Limiting disability and long-term health conditions

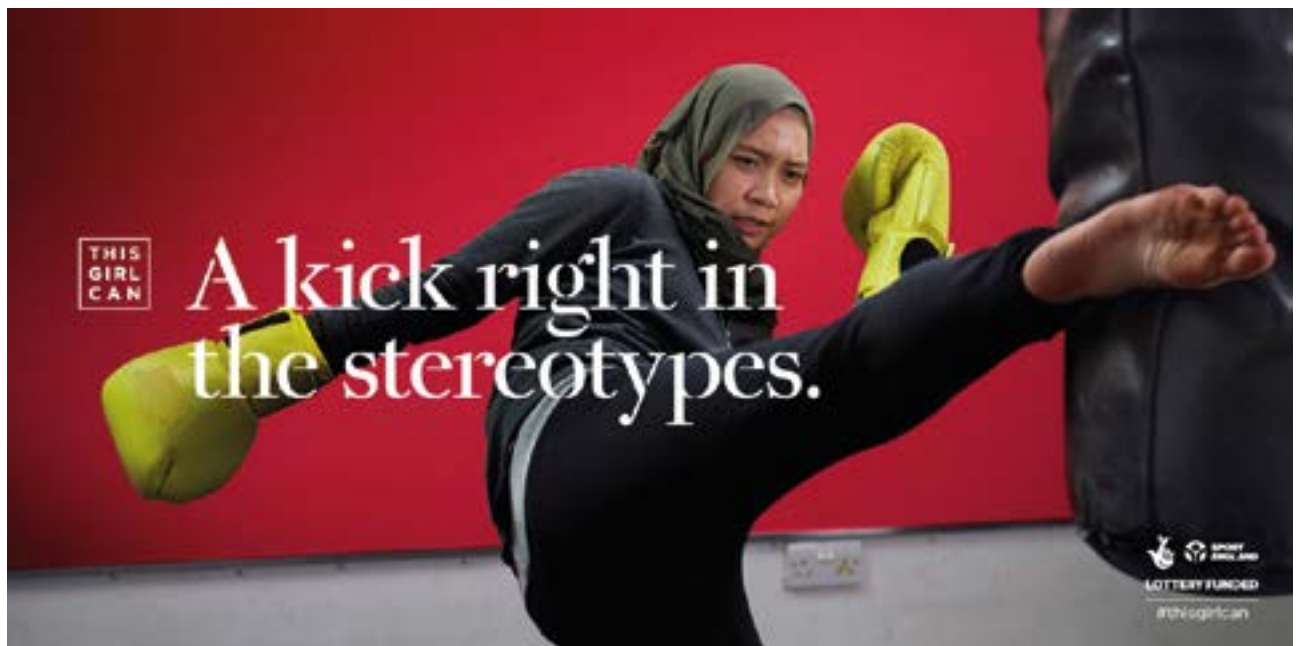
is defined as an individual reporting they have a physical or mental health condition or illness that's lasted, or is expected to last, 12 months or more, and that this has a substantial effect on their ability to do normal daily activities.

There is not one single cause of inactivity. Sport England's Uniting The Movement sets out the complex system of factors that impact an individual's experience of sport and physical activity. We expect the sector to be working to overcome the barriers for individuals and to focus on those most in need.

Women and girls

Despite the increased profile of women's sport over recent years, women and girls remain less likely to be physically active than men and boys. Sport England's *'This Girl Can'* campaign has made significant strides in this area by understanding and addressing the barriers to being active that women and girls report. Delivered via an innovative campaign model, it has used paid media, partnerships and activations to reach women and girls who don't normally engage with sport and physical activity.

This strategy comes at the start of the UK's hosting of the International Working Group (IWG) on Women in Sport between 2022 and 2026, secured by a successful bid led by the Sport and Recreation Alliance. The UK will use this opportunity to encourage increased participation, visibility and investment in women's sport. The IWG provides a platform for the UK to show global leadership in promoting women's sport, and brings countries together to further the development of women's and girls' sport. Over the course of the four-year term the IWG secretariat will host a range of events about women's sport, the centrepiece of which will be a global conference. We will work closely with the IWG as plans develop and ensure we continue to showcase women's sport in the UK, encouraging other countries to do the same.



Disabled people

Participation in sport and physical activity by disabled people is well below the levels for non-disabled people. The Annual Disability Survey showed that fewer than one in three (30%) disabled people agree that sport is for someone like them.¹⁹ This could be due to a number of factors, for example a lack of available participation options, or a fear of making a health condition worse. However, nearly two-thirds of disabled people who felt lonely agreed that being active could help them feel less lonely.²⁰

For too long, disability sport and inclusion have been overlooked or treated as afterthoughts, which is helping to widen the gap in participation. We are committed to changing this, and championing inclusion in sport. We demonstrated this commitment at the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, which had the largest parasport programme of any Commonwealth Games.

But in order for people to feel empowered to get active, the sport and physical activity sector must be ready to welcome them and make it as easy and enjoyable as possible for people to take part. Our local sports clubs and facilities need to adapt to ensure those who traditionally have not attended are warmly received. This will help create positive experiences which will encourage people to come back, ensuring a natural diversification of the sporting ecosystem.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) multi-sport grassroots facilities programme is an example of how the government is already working to address this, with a £230 million investment attached to explicit targets on improving access for underrepresented groups and deprived areas.



19 <https://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/research/annual-survey>

20 <https://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/research/annual-survey>

British Cycling's Limitless Programme

In February 2022, British Cycling launched Limitless, a new programme of inclusive opportunities to support disabled people to thrive in cycling.

Co-created with disabled people, Limitless has been designed to address the stubborn barriers they face to getting involved in sport and physical activity, including access to adaptive equipment, coaching sessions, and the number of accessible competitive events.

By working with the organisation's affiliated clubs and other providers such as disability charities and schools, the programme is helping to provide more opportunities to ride and race, and providing grant funding for clubs to spend on equipment, coaching and events.

British Cycling aims to create a nationwide network of Limitless clubs, and enable 5,000 disabled people to ride by 2026. After four months, the organisation has already supported the development of 39 Limitless clubs, who have welcomed 800 unique riders to participate in more than 300 sessions. The programme will also support five additional riders to compete at the 2028 Paralympic Games.²¹



21 <https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/limitless>

Our ambition

We want to see activity rates increase across the whole population, and likewise to see inactivity rates decrease. This is an ambition that the whole government and the sport and physical activity sector should share.

To deliver on this ambition and to help monitor progress in building a more active nation, we are now setting targets for the whole sector to work towards collaboratively.

At a national level this means that by 2030 we want to see:

- over 2.5 million more active adults, as defined by the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines on physical activity;
- over 1 million more children meeting the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines on physical activity;
- activity rates increasing and inactivity levels decreasing in all parts of the country.*

**This will be assessed using the geography of Active Partnerships to help us monitor and learn about where and how progress is being made at a local level across the country.*

Based on our learning to date, to achieve these ambitions **we believe that we need to ensure that public funding is targeted at; tackling the structural disparities that exist across society, strengthening the capacity within communities to support people to be active and embedding the agenda of sport and physical activity across a variety of sectors.** This will enable progress to happen more quickly within the priority groups that have the most to gain from getting active.

Whilst we will pivot public funding to ensure that we are fully committed to seeing change, we expect the whole sector to come together – public and private sectors – and work to make a difference in achieving these goals. Only through a concerted and coordinated effort can we expect to achieve them.

To reduce the disparities in participation rates, we will also be introducing specific ambitions to ensure that we are making progress by 2030. These will focus on the groups identified by Active Lives data as being the least active:

- 1.4 million more active adults from those in NS-SEC 6-8 (see “Terminology” in the “Building on strong foundations” section on pages 13-14).
- 0.7 million more active people who identify as having 1 or more disabilities.
- 1.5 million more active adults aged 55+.
- 1.25 million more active women.
- 0.19 million more active Asian adults, particularly people from Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups.
- 0.09 million more active black adults.

The roles of Sport England and Active Partnerships

Whilst Sport England, our arm's length body for grassroots sport in England, will provide a valuable contribution in helping create the conditions for a more active nation, it is not Sport England's sole responsibility to ensure that we meet our 2030 targets. Similarly, it is not the sole responsibility of the 43 Active Partnerships across England, who work at a local level to create the conditions for collaboration across partners and sectors to help deliver our 2030 local area targets. The geography of Active Partnerships helps us to understand through

robust data at a sub-national level where and how progress is being made. Delivering on our ambitions requires the whole sector to work together collaboratively to deliver the change that is needed.

Having said this, we will be introducing specific ambitions related to Sport England funding, demonstrating our joint commitment to tackling the disparities in activity levels across society.

By 2030, we want to see:

- At least 75% of Sport England place investment to be committed to areas with the lowest levels of physical activity and social outcomes.

We will also be setting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Sport England to outline the way in which their work and their funded programmes help contribute towards the overall targets.

Accountability

The whole sector should be aiming to achieve these ambitions, and holding ourselves to account for change if that has not happened.

To ensure that the government is committed to these targets and to publicly monitor progress, we will introduce a **new cross-government National Physical Activity Taskforce (NPAT)**. This will ensure that tackling inactivity is at the forefront of government decision-making and bring together the government departments which are central to the success of our ambitions, to agree the necessary checkpoints that need to be met in order to remain on track.

With membership of the new NPAT including government departments, arm's length bodies (ALBs) and representatives from across the sector, it will create a space in which all parties can work collaboratively to deliver on our shared ambition to get the nation more active. By having representatives from the sector present, it will enable leaders to be directly challenged on progress, and create an environment where innovative policy levers to deliver an increase in participation can be considered.

The group will meet quarterly, with meetings chaired by the Minister for Sport, and with attendance from respective government departments at a ministerial level.

What this will mean

- For government, this will mean genuine cross-departmental working to try to reduce inactivity levels, with a focus on specific groups. Public funding for sport will be expected to demonstrate how it is supporting our ambition and these targets.
- For the sector, this will provide clarity on what good looks like from a government perspective, and a framework for investment and co-investment. The NPAT will create a forum where challenge can happen in real time, to deliver better solutions for the country across government departments.
- For the country, this will mean that it is more likely that sport and physical activity investment and programmes will reach inactive people, and that it will be clear where money is being invested across England. Everyone will have the ability to take part in sport and be active in a way that works for them.

1.2 Getting children and young people active

There are many complicated reasons why children are not physically active. Every child has their own relationship with sport and physical activity, and we need to recognise this to tackle the inactivity challenge.



Over **50%** of children **fail** to do an average of 60 minutes of physical activity a day.

Creating positive participation experiences for children and young people no matter their background is essential to increasing levels of activity. A passion and enjoyment of movement, developed during childhood, can go a long way to create a positive foundation from which a lifetime of sport and physical activity can flourish. Government has a vital role to play in this, by ensuring that children have sociable, good quality and enjoyable experiences of sport in schools and community settings.

Sport and physical activity are also central to improving the mental health and resilience of young people, helping them to understand the importance of teamwork, fairness and how to overcome challenges, as well as support their personal development and their educational outcomes. Unfortunately, far too many children are not meeting the UK Chief Medical Officers' guidelines for children to do 60 minutes of physical activity per day. We need to take action to ensure that inactive children do not become inactive adults.

The past few years have been particularly challenging for our young people – the pandemic limited the formal opportunities for physical activity and socialisation during what are important formative years. That is why we must now act to tackle the systems and structures that make it difficult for children and young people to be active.



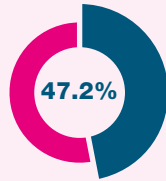
Children and Young People Inactivity levels:

Active Lives Children and Young People Data

collected in Academic Year 2021/2022 showed that only

47.2%
of children and young people
(3.4 million)

were meeting the UK Chief Medical Officers' guidelines.



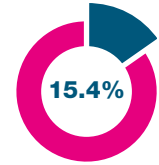
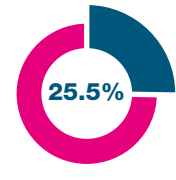
At age 10–11 (year 6),

25.5% of children

are **living with obesity** and

15.4%

are **overweight**.²²



1 in 7 children

are **living with obesity** by the time they start school, increasing to

1 in 4

by year six.

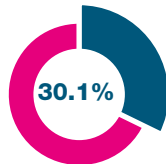
The UK ranked **lowest** out of

24 European countries

for the proportion of **15 year olds with high life satisfaction**.²³

30.1%

(2.2 million) of children do **less than an average of 30 minutes** of activity a day.



Shared Ambition

Every child should have the opportunity to play sport and do regular physical activity. The school day is key to this, but it should also extend to positive and inclusive participation opportunities outside the school day and in communities.

The benefits of the younger generation establishing a love of being physically active are huge. This is why this government has to be ambitious in our commitment to reducing inactivity for children. As a result, **we are introducing an ambition that all children should meet the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines on physical activity. To ensure that we achieve this ambition, we are introducing a target of over 1 million more active children by 2030.**

It is our duty to intervene at a young age to ensure that individuals get active, helping to deliver wider savings to our healthcare system, and enabling every child to reach their academic and economic potential. We believe that there is no time to waste in getting children to play sport and do physical activity, and only through a shared and realistic ambition can the whole of the sport sector come together and start to make meaningful change.

22 <https://digital.nhs.uk/news/2021/significant-increase-in-obesity-rates-among-primary-aged-children-latest-statistics-show>

23 <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/pisa-2018-results.htm>

This ambition doesn't mean that every child must now play sport (although for many this will be what they choose to do), but it highlights our commitment to levelling-up opportunities and embedding physical activity throughout every child's life. We want to ensure we build the best school sport system possible, ensuring that provision inside school and the wrap-around offer in clubs meets the needs of young people. We will do this by delivering the school sport commitments announced by the Department for Education in March 2023 to ensure equal and quality access to sport. This includes encouraging schools and academy trusts to embrace programmes that help their pupils meet the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines, regardless of their age, ability or personal circumstances, such as the Daily Mile.²⁴

Our ambitions to deliver this during the school day are set out in further detail in the updated School Sport and Activity Action Plan, which was published in July 2023.

The Daily Mile

The Daily Mile is an inclusive, free and impactful initiative where children run, jog, wheel, or walk for fifteen minutes during their curriculum time. Recently marking its eleven-year anniversary, this global initiative has flourished from a single primary school in Stirling, Scotland, to a widely embraced activity now engaging over 8000 primary schools and early years settings across England, with 46% of primary schools signed up.

The Department for Education has collaborated closely with The Daily Mile and Sport England to amplify this success, with Sport England having committed nearly £2m of public funding since 2018 to increase opportunities for the programme through to 2024 – and help create the conditions for successful private and commercial funding to support and sustain it in the future. In 2022, The Daily Mile joined forces with the Commonwealth Games Birmingham, introducing new school resources that enable children to earn badges while learning cross-curricular facts about athletics and para-athletics.



24 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/school-sports-given-huge-boost-to-level-the-playing-field-for-next-generation-of-lionesses>

Improving awareness

In order to ensure that our ambition to get every child active is appropriately prioritised across government, as well as by schools and parents, we will use the new cross-government National Physical Activity Taskforce (NPAT) to publicly monitor progress. This will ensure that we continue to prioritise achieving these ambitions and those set out in the School Sport and Activity Action Plan.

We also want to make sure parents and guardians recognise the benefits of getting children active at an early age, and their important role in achieving this. To address this, **we will work across government, our arm's length bodies, the wider sport sector and with commercial partners to establish the viability of a new targeted campaign to encourage children and young people to get active.**

This will start by working with Sport England to better understand the barriers preventing children from underrepresented groups from getting active and what interventions can be deployed in order to start to see change. We will also consult directly with children to understand what change they would like to see. Our work will begin by focusing on awareness of the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines, which we know is low among parents and teachers.



Evaluating our strategic investment and partnerships

Central to the success of our ambition on children and young people is the need to better connect schools and academy trusts with the sport system, and ensure that sport is available to all pupils in the core school day and outside of the school day.

In order to fulfil this goal, we must first have a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the current landscape. This requires us to undertake a **review of the current sport offer in schools, aside from Physical Education (PE) lessons.** This will enable us to better understand what is working well, and the opportunities to go further.

The first step in doing this is to examine the contribution of government programmes within this space. We will be commissioning **an evaluation of School Games Organisers,**

supported by an independent organisation. This review, which will be done in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Care, Sport England and the Youth Sport Trust, will consider the efficiency and strategic focus of the School Games programme and its unique role in helping tackle the stubborn disparities that exist for some young people. This is discussed in more detail in the “School Games Organisers” section below.

It will concentrate on ensuring that the programme delivers on our wider ambition to ensure that all children meet the Chief Medical Officers’ guidelines on physical activity, as well as the role that the network plays in connecting schools and school trusts with the wider sports community. Sport England will also re-examine the role and impact of the National Finals (a biennial multi-sport competition) to ensure that they are in sync with the application of the programme in schools and do not cut across other important National Governing Body (NGB) supported competitions.

In addition to the School Games Organisers (SGOs), the review will take into account the impact and learnings from the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) and the Opening Schools Facilities fund (OSF) in helping to improve the facilitation of sport outside of the formal school day. The review will also examine the important role that partners such as Active Partnerships have played in supporting the roll-out of these programmes.

By pooling the knowledge gained in delivering these programmes and working with our NGBs to undertake an audit of their current provision in schools, we can gain a comprehensive view of the current offer being made to pupils across the country. We will also examine the availability and inclusivity of community sports clubs in relation to schools, as whilst sport might not be for everyone, all children must have the opportunity to experience it and to pursue their chosen activity outside of school hours, if they wish to do so.

Using the information gained through the evaluation of the SGOs, the NGB audit, and building upon the learnings of the OSF and HAF, we will then scope the potential to launch a new **National Sport Participation Partnership Scheme**.

This potential scheme, informed by the findings from our review, would seek to improve connections between schools and clubs to ensure better access to participation opportunities for school pupils, as well as aim to streamline and simplify the information that schools receive on how to deliver sport in schools. This will help drive up the standard and consistency of coaching, support teachers, as well as improve connections between schools and clubs.

The review of the current sport offer in schools outside of PE will report back before the end of the 2023/24 academic year. This will help provide clarity for employees of the SGO network, and enable us to keep up the momentum in delivering on our ambition.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

The Department for Education’s HAF programme has helped children to get active in the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays. First piloted in 2018, the HAF programme helps local authorities to deliver activities during the school holidays. Importantly, the programme’s guidelines include expectations on the variety and types of activity that should take place, as well as stipulating that all children and young people participating in the HAF programme should engage in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity for an average of at least 60 minutes per day, as per the Chief Medical Officers’ guidelines.

PE and sport premium for primary schools

Schools play a vital role in helping children and young people to get active and, in turn, meet the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines.

As government, we are committed to providing the support needed to ensure there are quality experiences of sport in school. That is why we have **confirmed funding for the primary PE and sport premium and School Games Organiser (SGO) network until the end of the summer term 2025**. It shows our commitment to young people's participation, and is the foundation for our plans on PE and sport.

Experiences of PE in school can often be the determining factor in whether an individual has a positive or negative perception of sport and physical activity for the rest of their life. Important progress is already being made on improving the quality of PE and sport, but there is still more work to be done to ensure that every child gets a PE experience that sets them up for life.

From a position of strength with confirmed funding, the updated cross-government School Sport and Activity Action Plan focuses on improving the quality of PE and sport, ensuring equal access for girls and boys, and increasing the number of children playing sport and meeting curriculum expectations, particularly around swimming and water safety.

The Department for Education encourages schools to deliver two hours of PE a week, but we know that not all schools meet this objective. DCMS will work in partnership with the Department for Education to help assist schools to deliver better quality PE and sport and strive for best practice.

Funded by the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care, the PE and sport premium supports primary schools to make sustainable improvements to the PE and sport they offer. The government wants to improve oversight of the premium and give schools more tools to understand how to use this grant more effectively. To do this, updated guidance has been published by the Department for Education and a new digital tool is being created for schools to report on spending of their allocation of the premium. The digital tool will be made available from summer 2024.



School Games Organisers (SGOs)

Likewise, the SGOs are essential in ensuring that all children have the opportunity to take part in competitive sport. In the academic year 2021/22, the country-wide network of 450 SGOs provided over 2.19 million opportunities for children to take part, and ran 2,500 events across the country, with an equal number of boys and girls taking part.

This is important not only from an activity perspective, but also because it helps young people to develop teamwork skills, understand success and failure, and use these experiences to inform the way in which they equip themselves in the years ahead.

By giving early funding certainty to the network, it allows schools to plan ahead and prevent valuable individuals from moving on. In doing this, we hope to enable schools that wish to group together in trusts and share resources over the long term to do so. This includes maximising the role of SGOs to ensure that intra-school competitions are available.

We have also expanded the School Games Mark to reflect our ambitions on equal access to sport for boys and girls. From academic year 2023/24, the Schools Games Mark will now include equal opportunities for both sexes as part of the criteria. The update to the School Sport and Activity Action Plan sets this out in further detail.

As a reflection of the importance of the SGOs, we want to ensure that the network is appropriately funded and targeted to help deliver on our ambition to increase the number of active children. This is why we are commissioning an evaluation of SGOs supported by an independent organisation, to report before the end of the 2023/24 academic year.

School Games

The School Games, funded by DCMS and the Department of Health and Social Care, and delivered by the Youth Sport Trust, offer children of all abilities a chance to take part in competitive sport. Funded SGOs work at a local level, and Active Partnerships at a county level, to create an annual calendar of competition. Since 2010, the School Games have offered 13.4 million participation opportunities for young people.



Outside the school day

Our ambition to achieve the UK Chief Medical Officers' guidelines on physical activity is not solely confined to the school day. We know that we need to do more to ensure that children remain active when leaving the school gates, and feel safe and supported when doing so.

As part of this, the Department for Education is taking forward a package of work to support out-of-school settings, including extra-curricular sport and activity clubs, to implement good safeguarding practices. This will include plans to publish an update to existing safeguarding guidance for out-of-school setting providers and the accompanying guidance for parents, the launch of a call for evidence on proposals for improving safeguarding practices in out-of-school settings, and continuing to support local authorities to make full use of their existing legal powers to tackle unsafe settings.^{25 26}

Physical activity before and after school is a crucial way in which we can get children moving – in particular by maximising the opportunities to be active on the journey to and from school. For this reason, the government is fully committed to supporting active travel, and enabling increased walking and cycling as part of the school journey. As part of this, the **Department for Transport has committed £21 million to the Bikeability Trust to provide cycle training for children and families, to encourage as many people as possible to take up cycling, and feel more confident on the roads.**

Since it started in 2006, 4 million children in England outside London have learned to cycle responsibly through the Bikeability programme. The Department for Transport has also provided the charity Living Streets with £2 million in 2022/23 to enable more children to walk to school. The Department for Education continues to support walking and cycling initiatives, enabling schools to deliver activities in and around the school day.

10 Minute Shake Up campaign

The '10 Minute Shake Up' campaign is the Department of Health and Social Care's (DHSC) flagship children's physical activity initiative, which aims to get children physically active, have fun and build new skills. Launched in 2014, it has run annually over the summer, when activity levels naturally decline as schools and term-time extra-curricular clubs are closed. Over 10 million children have participated since its launch.

The campaign breaks down the Chief Medical Officers' recommended hour of daily activity into short 10-minute bursts, through children's games inspired by their favourite Disney characters. These are promoted online and through a hard copy 'games pack' distributed to children via schools, local authorities and the Department for Education's Holiday Activities and Food Programme.

DHSC's pioneering partnership with Disney is central to the campaign's success, with 85% of parents saying the involvement of Disney made their child more interested in the campaign. In 2022, the campaign got 844,000 children more active, 2.2 million games packs were distributed, and 80% of parents whose child participated said their child had more opportunity to be physically active as a result of the campaign.

25 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-out-of-school-settings-code-of-practice/keeping-children-safe-during-community-activities-after-school-clubs-and-tuition-non-statutory-guidance-for-providers-running-out-of-school-settings#who-is-this-guidance-for>

26 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-safeguarding-children-in-out-of-school-settings>

Youth services can also provide the space to both inspire and support young people to take up sport and physical activity outside the school day. The government has committed to a National Youth Guarantee, that by 2025 every young person in England will have access to regular out-of-school activities, adventures away from home and opportunities to volunteer. This guarantee is backed by over £500 million of funding, including over £300 million through the Youth Investment Fund.

We also need to do more to better connect community sports teams and other physical activity clubs to schools' sporting facilities. With 35% of all sports facilities in this country behind school gates, an obvious way to increase participation is to open these up for community use. The Department for Education's Opening School Facilities (OSF) programme is an important step in the right direction. The programme, which is investing up to £57 million over a three-year period, aims to support schools to open their facilities in the evenings and weekends, and during the holidays.

The programme also aims to target schools where opening up the facilities will support raising the activity levels of the most inactive pupils. This also extends to the school holidays, when we know that children's participation rates drop due to the absence of formalised sport. Our review of the school sport offer outside of curriculum PE will consider the learnings from the OSF programme when considering what further action is required.



Open Doors programme

Research by UK Active showed that there was a 74% loss in cardiovascular fitness in children and young people during the summer holidays as a result of an absence of structured participation opportunities.²⁷

Through the Open Doors programme, UK Active, in partnership with Nike, is using community sport organisations and local delivery organisations to unlock school playing fields, halls and courts to deliver participation opportunities for the most vulnerable children and young people during school holidays. For example, the programme at New City Primary School in East London provided a daily programme of activities for 75 children.



What this will mean

- For government, this plan will mean that government investment is really delivering for our children and young people, making every pound count and ensuring that we are maximising the opportunities from school sport.
- For the sector, this will mean supporting schools on how best to use PE and sport funding and to make the most of the School Games to give children a great experience of sport. It will mean a more strategic approach to sport after the school day, that offers more to children and makes it easier for NGBs and schools to work together.
- For the country, this will mean that children have more opportunity to find a sport they enjoy, and to be active throughout the day. It will mean that girls and boys have equal opportunities to have 2 hours of PE a week and will have the chance to experience more sport outside of school hours, with better links to clubs in the local area.

1.3 Telling our story – data and evidence

To continue to drive down inactivity levels, and meet our targets, we need to know whether investments are having the desired impact – whether public funding or private investment. Only through this approach can we adapt to make change in real time, focus on the groups that need support, and ensure that we learn lessons when investments don't have the impact expected. This foundation allows future investments to build on previous success, and crucially to start moving the dial on health spending on physical activity.

Significant strides have been made since the 2015 publication of *Sporting Future* to improve our approach to measurement, including the establishment of the world-leading Active Lives survey, but more needs to be done.

For public funding, it is right that we scrutinise how it is being spent and set the framework for the private sector to do likewise. We need to better evidence the role that public investment has on delivering Sport England's ambitions as set out in *Uniting the Movement*. This is for two reasons: firstly, it allows us to know whether public funding is genuinely helping those it is intended.

Secondly, it allows us to be agile in adapting funding to where need is most, or where we have confidence in success. We will support the sport sector (whether private or public organisations) to be ambitious in trying new things to reach different groups but, in return, when approaches are not working they should be changed.

This means monitoring how money is being spent, gathering data to show how it is having an impact at a local level, and being prepared to make changes if there is evidence it is not working. By taking this action, we can demonstrate the value of specific investments and continue, where we can, to increase funding on proven approaches. Only by taking this approach, and being accountable for it, can the government and Sport England drive meaningful change with public funding.

Having a greater focus on data will also help cement the evidence of the connection between having an active population and improved health outcomes. This will help highlight the valuable preventative role that physical activity can play, for instance the role that leisure centres can play in delivering more integrated health services. This will enable local leaders to make bold decisions about investing in future facilities, and help utilise valuable health related investment pots. It will also help to better evidence whether there are specific policy mechanisms that would help to further unlock the growth potential of the sector, particularly the private element, which we know has the potential to continue to grow and support us in reaching groups that are currently inactive.

Social prescriptions

As part of *Gear Change*, the cycling and walking plan for England, the government has committed to a social prescribing trial, whereby GPs and other health professionals can prescribe walking, wheeling and cycling to help improve an individual's health and wellbeing.²⁸

The £13.9 million trial, announced in August 2022, will fund pilot projects in 11 local authorities, with activities such as adult cycle training, free cycle loan schemes and walking groups available free of charge in their local area.

The pilots, which are being delivered alongside improved active travel infrastructure, will help evaluate the impact of walking and cycling on an individual's health and how active travel could be incorporated into a social prescribing approach.

Government, with Sport England, will lead the way in improving the evidence base. To do this we will:

- **Measure the progress made in tackling inactivity annually through the Active Lives Survey and the Active Lives Children survey**, and in real time by seeking new sources of data that allow us to monitor progress. We need to look beyond just inactivity numbers at what data we have (both quantitative and qualitative) to know whether we are succeeding, and to adapt and make changes when we are not.
- **Work with Sport England to include specific key performance indicators (KPIs) on decreasing inactivity, particularly among under-represented groups.** Through demonstrating the impact of public investment on delivering this change.
- **Support Sport England to introduce a new partner evaluation framework** which tracks the impact of sector partners and provides six-monthly reports evidencing spend and impact. This should show us what is working and how we can scale that up.
- Undertake discrete **monitoring and evaluation of government funded facilities programmes**, including the multi-sport grassroots facilities investment programme.
- Ensure that there is a **comprehensive programme of research** that will provide robust methods and analysis required to 'prove' the impact of physical activity on health.
- **Share the frameworks for these evaluations** so the private sector understands what expectations are on demonstrating impact of investment.
- Work with the sector to build the **evidence base** on potential policy mechanisms and regulatory reforms that could be introduced to unlock further investment and growth of the private sector.

Whilst there remains a need for bold solutions to the participation challenge, we need to clearly evidence what works and be prepared to build upon it. By measuring success through the above mechanisms, the government will be able to see whether progress is being made both by itself and Sport England through the implementation of *Uniting the Movement*, and the outputs of its funded partners. By improving this evidence base, it will also help to unlock potential investment in preventative health.

28 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-plan-for-england>

Given the importance of making progress in this area, we must not shy away from making changes when things aren't working. Together with Sport England, we will work with partners to ensure we adapt our approach as needed to achieve our aims, and will ask the same of those investing elsewhere across the sector.

What this will mean

- For government, this plan will mean a constant focus on our targets, and regular accountability across departments and arm's length bodies for meeting them.
- For the sector, this will mean consistency of messaging and the opportunity to be directly involved in the conversations around accountability. We want to see the sector working together to ensure that they contribute to our overall activity targets.
- For the country, this will mean that when investment is made, you can have confidence that it is focused on what works best to get people active in the areas where it is needed.



1.4 Active communities and the role of facilities

In order for people to be active, they need to have access to high quality and inclusive spaces in which to participate. This doesn't just refer solely to traditional sports facilities, but also to wider spaces for recreation and activity.

Across the nation there are a variety of outdoor spaces for people who want to get physically active or play sport. Our green and blue spaces provide the location for a wide variety of physical activities: from our 10 National Parks and 34 Areas of Natural Beauty and our network of urban parks for activities including walking, running and cycling, to our rivers, lakes, canals and coastline for outdoor water sports. However, not everyone has equal access to these spaces for outdoor recreation: less than half of the least well-off households live within a five minute walk of green space.²⁹

Outdoor recreation

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of our natural environment as a place to get active. The government's 2023 Environmental Improvement Plan outlines our commitment to promoting sport and physical activity in green and blue spaces in order to support health and wellbeing. Given that nature is good for both the body and soul, the plan commits to improving access to opportunities for outdoor recreation by working to ensure that everyone in England lives within 15 minutes of a green or blue space. The plan also includes a commitment to make the 2,700 mile King Charles III England Coast Path fully walkable by 2024.³⁰



29 <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/the-grass-isnt-greener-for-everyone-why-access-to-green-space-matters>

30 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan>

Equally important are venues for organised participation, such as pitches, gyms, leisure centres and sports halls. All of these venues and their supporting infrastructure, including clubhouses, play vital roles in their communities. They provide jobs and volunteering opportunities, and help people to meet others. They are also sources of local pride and social hubs for communities throughout the country, delivering benefits which transcend any one game, swim, skate or workout.

Whilst the current physical activity offer provides a valuable contribution to getting people active across the country, we know it is not right for everyone, with some individuals and communities feeling they can't do the sports and physical activity they want. This is contributing to high levels of inactivity across the country and is something that we are determined to change.

Government will provide the strategic direction to addressing this issue, but we need partners from across the public and private sector to work together to ensure that provision is accessible and reflects the needs of the community.

Key barriers to getting active related to active spaces and facilities

Location: the physical location and connectivity of an individual's nearest park, leisure centre and swimming pool can have a huge bearing on their ability to participate. The availability of walking/cycling routes, parking, public transport links and whether the site itself feels safe, are key considerations for users.

Quality: in general, people prefer to exercise in a leisure centre rather than in an informal setting such as a village hall. As such, and with any paid for service, there is an expectation about the standard of the facilities and the level to which they are maintained. This also applies to traditional sports facilities, such as football pitches.

Accessibility: not all facilities are accessible for everyone, and some high-quality spaces are not suitable for all ages or those with particular disabilities. As such, questions around available equipment, the level of staff training and whether reasonable adjustments have been made have a direct impact on whether some users can attend. Additionally, the availability of facilities can also be a hugely limiting factor, with sites often packed at peak periods, and participants unable to book.

Value: a question that every individual wanting to take part in an activity will make is "is it the best use of my time and money?". This will be a personal decision based on many factors, but it is up to facilities to convince users of the positive case, and to ensure that wherever possible they offer options for those on lower incomes.

Public leisure and sport facility provision

Public leisure provision has an important role to play in contributing to a happier and healthier society. Providing more than just a venue for people to play sport and get active, public leisure and sport facilities also support wider community wellbeing. For the leisure sector to be fit for the future, it needs to be flexible and innovative in adapting to changes in participation habits and in securing investment. This includes being considered within the wider local authority landscape for how it can contribute to improving physical and mental health outcomes for individuals across the community, rather than sometimes just offering an alternative to other gym provision.

There are some great examples where the local leisure estate is being used in a holistic and innovative manner, such as the use of leisure centres as musculoskeletal hubs. However, there are also plenty of areas that have seen their local public leisure provision decline. Too many facilities across the country fail to deliver a sustainable and quality offer to the community, with some duplicating services already delivered by the private sector, resulting in over-subsidised and underutilised sites.

Public swimming pools are particularly important to the participation landscape, offering an accessible and low-impact option to take part in sport, as well as providing a venue for teaching swimming and water safety. For this reason, the government has announced the £63 million Swimming Pool Support Fund, to help public swimming pools and their providers cope with immediate cost pressures, including rising energy prices, and provide investment in energy efficiency measures. This fund has not been designed to support every swimming pool in the country, but to protect facilities that deliver an accessible and affordable service to the community where there is no other comparable option. Applications for funding for the Swimming Pool Support Fund will be led by local authorities and will need to be made with a strategic vision for the future of public leisure provision in their area.

We are also investing in delivering new multi-sport facilities, renovating park tennis courts across the country and ensuring that public swimming pools are fit for the future. Delivering these programmes has been a collaborative approach, working with partners from across the sport sector to ensure that facilities meet the needs of the community. Similarly, we have been working to ensure that facilities built to support the hosting of major sporting events are appropriately located and fit the needs of the local community, to help deliver important participation legacy ambitions.



Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games – Sandwell Aquatics Centre

As part of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, more than £70 million was invested into building the Sandwell Aquatics Centre in Smethwick, West Midlands, creating a brand new, world-class facility for community and elite-level swimming and diving. As a result of this investment – part of more than £170 million of infrastructure investment going into the Games – the Aquatics Centre has the capacity to train the next generation of young, talented divers in England. But it was also designed with community need at the forefront. An early consultation was held with local people with local people and communities to understand local priorities and to meet post-Games community requirements. This resulted in the introduction of women-only swimming sessions, a women-only gym, and plans focused on tackling lower levels of swimming attainment across the Black Country and West Midlands.



Through our programme to deliver multi-sport grassroots facilities throughout the UK, **the government is continuing to invest over £300 million across the UK to deliver new sports facilities or improve existing venues.** This is leveraging considerable additional investment by local partners, and national bodies like the Football Association, the Football Foundation and the Premier League. This has been made possible through direct partnership with local sector leaders, to ensure we are making investment decisions strategically, and that we meet the needs of communities. Up to 40% of the investment will go towards projects that benefit multiple sports so that there is a suitably wide offer, beyond football. Investment will also focus on providing facilities in geographically disadvantaged areas, and increasing sports participation among under-represented groups such as women and girls, disabled players and people from ethnic minority groups.

Similarly, we are investing £21.9 million to deliver improved access to park tennis courts across Britain. The benefitting sites were selected following a review of all park tennis courts in the country, which highlighted the courts most in need of refurbishment. This is an innovative

case of government investment, where we have worked directly with a national governing body (the Lawn Tennis Association) to deliver funding across the country.

A focus on communities and local leadership

Our primary focus in improving the physical activity landscape is creating a country in which everyone, no matter where they live or their background, can access a facility where they feel able and confident to take part in sport and physical activity. These facilities should also inspire existing participants to continue being active. This ambition is central to the government's overall mission to level up opportunities and access across the UK.

It is crucial that local people are at the heart of the decision-making process and that the needs of individual communities are considered in order to address inactivity. Decisions on funding new and existing facilities and spaces should be guided by those who really understand community needs and can inform what is likely to work. This approach accepts that the answer to every problem is not always to simply provide more money, but instead to focus more on strategic leadership and local collaboration. With this in mind, we would encourage local leaders and local authorities to ensure that there is a clear and well-evidenced facilities plan for their local area. This should take into account informal spaces for participation as well as the role that the local leisure estate plays in contributing to physical activity and wider wellbeing. Government will work with the Local Government Association (LGA) to provide advice and support on how to do this.

Our commitment to place-based interventions is highlighted by the Sport England partnership approach introduced through *Uniting the Movement*, in particular through the increased level of funding to the Active Partnerships network. This focuses on helping local leaders to understand national policies and unlock funding pots to address the inactivity challenge. The network is funded by Sport England, but each partnership is empowered to make decisions, recognising that local leaders have the best understanding of where and what action is needed.

To ensure there is a continued focus on localised solutions and to ensure partnership working is delivering the change we need, **we are introducing a target for at least 75% of Sport England place investment to be committed to areas with the lowest levels of physical activity and social outcomes**. This will ensure a continued focus on ensuring that community voices and needs are put at the heart of investment decisions.

Active Dearne – Yorkshire Sport

Active Dearne, a programme led by the Active Partnership, Yorkshire Sport Foundation, supported adults and families on low incomes across the Dearne Valley to become more active.

The programme used community champions and already established local groups to promote different types of physical activity to suit the specific needs of individuals across the community's broad spectrum. The types of activity offered included walking rugby linked to Wath Upon Dearne RFC, and Buggy Walks in Mexborough.

The success of the project relied on cooperation between local authorities and sector partners, with the Active Partnership providing the backbone support for the sport and physical activity community. By its third year, the project had grown from operating in four communities to nine.



Given the wider health and social benefits of offering opportunities for physical activity, we encourage local authorities to take greater accountability for integrating physical activity into their local priorities and strategies. We would encourage each local authority to have a strategic objective to improve the health and wellbeing of its population, in addition to its plan for local leisure provision. This will help to ensure that there is joined-up local policy making towards this outcome, improved local accountability, and that local leaders and authorities are having positive impacts within their spheres of influence.

To ensure that local leaders are committed to driving forward improvements in access to participation and focusing investment correctly, we are introducing a target to monitor activity rates through a local lens, **with an expectation of seeing activity rates increasing in every Active Partnership area by 2030**. This means that regardless of current levels of activity or inactivity, we will be able to see what steps have been made to drive forward improvements at a local level to help us achieve our overall national ambition.

This target will put the spotlight on local decision making and harness the value of local assets to create new and bespoke opportunities to be active, tailored to the local community. It will also establish a pathway to encourage more volunteers to engage with sport and physical activity. This will help to ensure that, despite it not being a statutory service, the provision of public leisure is being formally considered and appropriately prioritised. This approach also allows us to see the areas where more support is needed, and target the providers of sport and physical activity in those locations to ensure change is being made.

The government is also working closely with its arm's length bodies, including Sport England, to develop a new, strengthened ALB partnership-working approach in a number of places which have received devolution deals, supporting greater funding alignment, joint investment and strategic collaboration with local government. This will enable more place-sensitive approaches in these areas, empowering regional stakeholders to make the decisions that work best for their places and the people who live, work, and visit them.

Beat The Street

By turning towns into interactive games where participants earn points, win prizes and discover more about their area by walking, running and cycling, Beat the Street provides communities with an engagement platform that normalises getting active. Players swipe their cards at consecutive locations to earn points on journeys, such as on the way to school or work.

Delivered via a collaborative funding model which sees local authorities play a leading role in delivery, this innovative game engages 10% of the population and has helped to drive behaviour change in over 160 places across the country. Studies which captured the project's impact on levels of activity in Hounslow found that the number of players doing less than 30 minutes of activity per week decreased by 7% and those reporting more than 150 minutes of activity increased by 13%. The study also reported 53% fewer cars and vans in the morning commute and 33% fewer cars in the afternoon. Sustainability is seen in the small changes to daily behaviour for adults and children that make a big difference at scale. Cross-sector partners co-deliver the programme that supports multiple outcomes for health, active travel and social cohesion.

Planning for the future

To support our ambitions on strategic investment and local decision-making, we need a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of where facilities and spaces are, and how they are used. **For this reason, we will work with the sector to develop a National Vision for Facilities before the end of 2023.**

This will outline the spaces in England where people are active, build on insight we have through existing investment programmes, and draw on consultations with partners and local authorities. The purpose of this work is to develop a full picture of current provision across the country and use this to ensure that future investment decisions are made in a strategic way.

The National Vision for Facilities will seek to create a framework that empowers and informs local leaders. It will help to identify gaps in provision to determine where further investment in facilities is needed. This information will help us to consider some of the longer-term questions around sector resilience that were raised due to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly with regard to public sector leisure facilities.

Strategic vision

When making decisions about the future of public leisure, nostalgia must not be allowed to play a part. Whilst the rationalisation of services and the closures of public leisure facilities are difficult, when done for the right reasons and managed appropriately, they deliver important efficiencies and improve the participation experiences for all users.

Whilst the government acted quickly to support public leisure services during the COVID-19 pandemic, and more recently through the Swimming Pool Support Fund, central government cannot be relied upon to provide financial support to prop up local leisure provision in the future. As we move forward, systemic change is now needed to ensure that public leisure is both relevant and viable in the coming years.

In order to deliver these ambitions, there needs to be decisive local leadership. This begins with ensuring that local decision-making appreciates the role of physical and mental wellbeing as a means towards prevention. A crucial part of this is investing to ensure that local leisure stock is functional, energy-efficient and meets local needs, as well as ensuring that the conditions are right to attract alternative and sustainable forms of investment to help support the sector. Sport England is collaborating with the LGA to support councils to adopt strategies that help to tackle health disparities and encourage participation, including through the delivery of the Leadership Essentials course for councillors.

In a similar way, we would encourage local authorities to better use the data that they gather through bookings at leisure centres and other recreation facilities. For example, Moving Communities, the national dataset that was created to support the recovery of the local leisure sector during the pandemic, is enabling people to get a real-time view of performance that supports benchmarking and insight.³¹ This is helping local authorities and operators to develop activity timetables that better suit users, as well as establish new programmes to reach people that are not currently engaged. This approach will also help to improve the economic sustainability of facilities, as the activity they provide will more accurately meet the needs of the local community.

It is vital that local leaders have the confidence and understanding of how investing in an active population can reduce the burden on other local services and infrastructure, such as GP surgeries. Equally important is an acceptance that results won't necessarily be instantaneous, but the benefits will be felt both by current residents and future generations. We believe that local leisure has a crucial role in preventative health, and are urging the use of data to make that case locally.



One Public Estate

Through the One Public Estate programme, West Suffolk is transforming how its public services are being delivered to meet the needs of its communities and create revenue savings.

The Mildenhall Hub, opened in 2021, brings together education, health, employment, culture and leisure services to work collaboratively under one roof, in the heart of this community.

This approach enables community health teams and leisure services to work together to offer a joined-up exercise referral scheme that supports patient rehabilitation; a full-time family hub is jointly delivering children's community and health services. In co-locating leisure services with the library, both have seen increased uptake of services, with participation in swimming lessons up 45% on pre-COVID-19 statistics, and over 700 new library members. Meanwhile, more students are able to benefit from a brand new school, with greater capacity to serve the population.³²

Whilst the government will work to develop a vision for facilities, we don't want this to be a one-way process. We want to empower local leaders to use the information provided to help inform their own understanding of the facilities and workforce they need. This means that we want local authorities, schools and sector partners to work together to establish a local plan for what they need in their area, which should then help develop a pipeline for delivery and evidence to underpin their funding requests across government.

This local plan should extend beyond traditional leisure venues and consider adapting the built and natural environment to encourage people to be active through their everyday lives. Through adopting the principles of Active Design, it will help ensure that local planning decisions help to create more organic opportunities to be active.³³ Part of this means having a coherent Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for the local area to help facilitate active travel and support children to have active school journeys. It also means considering whether the co-location of community facilities, for example housing a library and a gym on the same site, might be the most effective and cost-efficient way to deliver public services and improve health outcomes. Sport England has developed a range of tools and guidance to assist local authorities with their strategic planning for leisure services and provision.³⁴

It also requires joined-up and coordinated local thinking to ensure that any bids for government funding, such as the Levelling Up Parks Fund, maximise the potential for individuals to get active.

32 <https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/transforming-public-services-west-suffolk>

33 <https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/active-design>

34 <https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/future-public-leisure>

Woodford Green Library

Adapting existing infrastructure to allow co-location of local authority services can offer an effective and low-cost option for driving up levels of physical activity. In Redbridge, the local authority converted the Woodford Green Library into a combined library and gym to boost interest in the library and provide another opportunity for local residents to get active. The refurbishment and the addition of the gym cost £350,000, including the cost of the gym equipment, and took 6 months. The Library/Gym is now open an additional 57 hours per week, and with the gym now there it generates enough income to make the site cost neutral. This replicated the successful model introduced at South Woodford Library & Gym in 2015.

Workforce

Having a committed and energised workforce is crucial for delivering the right conditions for local people to want to engage with physical activity. We need to ensure that we are empowering individuals and organisations to create the workforce of the future.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on both the paid and voluntary workforce. Around a quarter of the workforce left the sector during the pandemic, leading to a particular shortage of lifeguards, swimming teachers, fitness instructors and swimming coaches.³⁵ There is now the need to work collaboratively with key partners to improve access to opportunities for work and volunteering.

To achieve this, local leadership is required to ensure that there are attractive and inclusive channels to employment available across the sector, with skills development and career progression. This sometimes might require a more flexible and wider benefits-focused approach to attracting and retaining potential employees.

The sector also needs to continue to work together and share best practice on ensuring coaches and volunteers are properly accredited to fulfil their roles. The work of the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) is vitally important in ensuring that the highest standards of professionalism are embedded across the entire sector. The recently launched two-year pilot scheme to develop and test a national workforce registration scheme is an important step in achieving this. **Government supports the efforts made by CIMSPA to support the sector to self-regulate its workforce and will work with CIMSPA, Sport England and UK Sport to review the recommendations outlined from the pilot work in 2025.**

We see the opportunities the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022 and the devolution of skills funding have presented to transform the skills and training landscape, and in doing so will provide our new and current workforce with the skills and knowledge needed to meet the demand of our evolving sector. We will support CIMSPA in the development of Local Skills Improvement Plans with full national coverage.

35 <https://www.cimspa.co.uk/resources/insight-hub/insight-library/>

Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP)

Following the Skills and Post-16 Education Act becoming law in 2022, CIMSPA have been working to deliver pilot programmes across the country to meet the needs of an evolving sector.

In 2022 the Department for Education-funded trailblazers in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland helped ensure maximum skills and training investment opportunities in the sector to meet the priorities of the East Midlands Chambers of Commerce. Working with CIMSPA, the pilot facilitated focused investment in the sector by opening up constructive dialogue to ensure that employers understood their skills gap. Additional investment was targeted to unlock the potential of individuals and businesses.

Coaches play a hugely important role in facilitating sporting activity and acting as a source of inspiration and encouragement for people to remain active. In order to support coaches, UK Coaching is working across the country alongside local partners to help develop coaches within local communities. In 2022, the group received £10 million of investment to provide support for coaches, enhanced learning and development, and to ensure that coaches are able to deliver more inclusive sessions.



Play Their Way

The Play Their Way campaign, developed by the Children Coaching Collaborative, seeks to work alongside England's 2.6 million coaches and 17 partner organisations, including Sport England, to ensure children have the best possible experience in sport and activity through the people who know them best – their coaches. The campaign will put children's enjoyment of sport and physical activity front and centre, in the hope that it will help them enjoy being active in their own way and allow great coaching to inspire children into staying active for life.

Volunteering

Volunteers are the lifeblood of sport and physical activity. Every day, night and weekend, people are able to learn, play sport and get active thanks to others giving up their own time to facilitate it.

Volunteers are vital to achieving a vibrant and resilient civil society. We are focusing our efforts on widening access to volunteering through exploring solutions to some of the long-standing barriers to participating in volunteering which existed prior to, or were exacerbated by, the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our role is to encourage and enable a lifetime of volunteering and other forms of social action, promoting the value of volunteering across and beyond government, and supporting the development of better-connected communities.

We have supported the voluntary and community sector to develop a Vision for Volunteering, which sets a clear and ambitious direction to simplify access to, and experiences of, volunteering in England by 2032. Sport England is a partner alongside The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), Volunteering Matters, National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) and the Association of Volunteer Managers. Working with partners across the sport and activity sector, Sport England will be looking at how to create a diverse, innovative, sustainable, ambitious and person-centred future for volunteering – supporting the limitless potential of people power and embracing the opportunities in change.

As part of the National Youth Guarantee, DCMS extended the #iWill Fund by £6 million, which was fully matched by the National Lottery Community Fund, creating tens of thousands of new social action opportunities particularly focusing on young people who would not normally have the chance to take part. The #iWill Fund operates on a match-funder model where organisations such as Sport England, the Premier League Charitable Fund and Liverpool Football Club Foundation match funding in order to provide youth social action opportunities. Young people with an interest in social action and volunteering may also be interested in the #iWill movement, which works to promote social action for young people across the UK, empowering and supporting these young people to make a positive difference in their communities.

Ultimately, we are aiming for an increase in meaningful, impactful volunteering opportunities that contribute to our overall objective of tackling inactivity – through driving behaviour change and providing more opportunities to take part in sport and activity.

Volunteering Futures Fund

Through the £7.4 million Volunteering Futures Fund, 15,000 volunteering opportunities are being created to remove barriers to participation in the arts, culture, sports, civil society, youth and heritage sectors. Young people, people with disabilities and those experiencing loneliness will be given the opportunity to volunteer, allowing them to boost their own skills and wellbeing whilst contributing to the community around them.

DCMS invested £6.25 million in the fund, together with £1.17 million provided by matched funders. Sport England was one of the advisory partners, and provided outreach to the sports sector to ensure the fund helped build new cross-sector partnerships for delivery of volunteering activities.

What this will mean

- For government, this plan will mean continued investment in local facilities in areas that need it to deliver progress on activity. It will represent a further shift towards preventative health measures, which in time will help reduce the burden on the NHS and other health services. It will also mean support on the hard decisions local authorities face on their leisure provision, and scrutiny on individual local areas to ensure that progress on activity is being made country-wide.
- For the sector, this will mean short-term financial support on swimming pools to create the breathing room to create a strategic plan on facilities. This will help make the case for facilities at a local level and long-term private investment to deliver the right facilities in the right places for communities. This will also mean a sense of accountability in local areas when activity levels are not going in the right direction, and a strong network of local partners to tackle it.
- For the country, this will mean investment and facilities that are based around local needs, particularly for those who have been traditionally left behind in terms of government and private investment. It will mean local leisure is more likely to be focused on preventative health, with a long-term move towards supporting people to be active.

Summary

Actions:

Tackling disparities in participation

- We will introduce cross-government and cross-sector ambitions to increase activity rates and reduce levels of inactivity.
- We will improve cross-government working and prioritisation of physical activity by establishing a new cross government National Physical Activity Taskforce.
- We will better evidence the impact of investment:
 - Sport England to set an evidence-based measure of success in “Uniting the Movement” around tackling disparities in sport and activity.
 - Support Sport England to introduce a new partner evaluation framework which tracks the impact of sector partners and provides six-monthly reports evidencing spend and impact.
 - Undertake discrete monitoring and evaluation of government funded facilities programmes, including the multi-sport grassroots facilities investment programme.
 - Work with the sector to build the evidence base on potential mechanisms that could be introduced to enable the further growth of the private sector.

Children and young people

- We will introduce a cross-government ambition that all children should meet the Chief Medical Officers’ guidelines on physical activity (of doing at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day, or 20 minutes for disabled children)
- We will work across government, our arm’s length bodies and with commercial partners to establish the viability of a new unified campaign to encourage children and young people to get children active.
- We will improve the quality and access to PE and school sport for all pupils:
 - Introduce new equality criteria to the School Games Mark that encourages and recognises schools providing equal access to girls and boys.
 - Launch a review of the sport offer in schools outside of PE.
 - Continue to support active travel to and from school and Bikeability delivery in the school day.

Active spaces and facilities

- We will continue our strategic investment in facilities:
 - Deliver the investment in grassroots facilities, with over £300 million to be invested by 2025.
 - Deliver £21.9 million investment in park tennis courts by 2024.
- We will establish a strategic framework for the future of facilities:
 - Develop a National Vision for Facilities before the end of 2023.
 - Sport England to work with priority places to deliver an enhanced place-based working process.

Chapter 2:

Strengthening the
integrity of sport



Chapter 2:

Strengthening the integrity of sport

SUMMARY

Our objective is to make sport and physical activity more inclusive and welcoming for all so that everyone can have confidence that there is a place for them in sport. We will aim to:

- **Help the sector to be welcoming to all, by promoting women’s and disability sport, championing diversity across the sector and holding the sector to account for investing in these groups.** This will mean groups feel the benefit of public and private investment, that we see meaningful progress by 2030, and that cultural issues which put people off sport are relentlessly tackled.
- **Improve how issues and concerns are dealt with in the sector, starting by launching a call for evidence around sport integrity issues.** This will increase confidence in sport so that everyone knows that their welfare is at the heart of the sport system, whatever sport they play.

Introduction

Whatever the motivation to take part in sport or physical activity, everyone should be able to do so in full confidence that the people organising the activity have their best interests at heart. This is particularly relevant when considering the enormous efforts from volunteers and people working across the sector to engage people in sport, as well as the public investment being made into infrastructure and programmes to support this, as outlined in the previous chapter. It should be expected that those in charge are doing all they can to make environments welcoming, safe and secure, and that they’ll take action if they see that something is not right.

We know this is not always the case and it is unacceptable. We do not want people to turn away from sport because they have bad experiences and are let down by how their concerns are dealt with. We do not want people to feel like their voices aren’t heard and that the sector has nothing to offer them. And we absolutely do not want people to be mistreated and abused.

The government’s overriding aim in this part of the strategy is to ensure we build confidence in the sport and physical activity sector, and to do this at pace. We must use the knowledge, resources and skills across the sector efficiently and effectively to ensure that people are protected and can enjoy being active. This is about securing the future of sport and ensuring it is safe and welcoming for future generations – for individuals, but also for our reputation on the world stage.

In *Sporting Future*, we recognised that issues relating to welfare, safety and equality in sport were central to people’s experiences and that they required greater exploration. We commissioned Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson to review these areas in more detail. Her resulting Duty of Care in Sport Report, published in 2017, did much to raise the profile of welfare in sport, and set out recommendations for action across a number of areas of the

sector. Since the report was published, the government has taken action and worked with the sector to strengthen provision around safety and welfare, as set out below.

Action taken by government since the 2017 Duty of Care in Sport Report

- Extending ‘positions of trust’ laws to protect teenagers from abuse by making it illegal for sports coaches to engage in sexual activity with 16 and 17-year-olds they coach.
- Set out a programme of work to reduce the incidence and raise awareness of concussion in sport.
- Worked with UK Sport and Sport England to introduce the Code for Sports Governance, ensuring improved standards around welfare and diversity in publicly funded sports organisations.
- Led work with the sports and mental health sectors to deliver a Mental Health and Elite Sport Action Plan
- Arm’s length bodies have also introduced new guidance and support services to help sports organisations deal with safeguarding issues, strengthen mental health support and deal with complaints.

Beyond the Duty of Care report, we have also identified areas where government intervention can help improve welfare. These include work to improve awareness and reduce incidences of head injuries in sport, work to tackle racism and racial disparities across the sector, and championing the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) sports fans.

But despite this progress, the need to further improve remains. Recent years have seen a number of high-profile controversies relating to how people are treated in the sector, including issues such as discrimination, safeguarding and bullying. These are not just restricted to one sport, or to one level of participation – reports of mistreatment across multiple sports give a worrying picture of issues across the board. These failings are not acceptable.

Where there are gaps in capability or resources we will work with the sector to ensure it leads the way in meeting high standards of fairness, safety and inclusion, and has the tools and support it needs to do so. We will also work with others to carefully consider what further steps the government can take to make the system work better in identifying when things go wrong, and in handling complaints with sufficient independence.

We want sport to be an exemplar in championing accessibility and equality of opportunity in fairness and in protecting people’s welfare, so that the sector is a force for positive change in society. And we want the UK to be an exemplar for this approach. Only by doing this can we ensure that sport continues to be relevant in the future, that it can reach the widest range of people to help us tackle the great inactivity challenge we are facing, as well as support our aspiring athletes to reach their potential.

We encourage everyone involved in sport to engage with the issues set out in this chapter and to consider what steps they can take to help the sector remain resilient for the future. Individual actions can make a difference and are important. However, individual actions also need to be supported by fit-for-purpose structures and clear direction, and we are committed to taking action to ensure these are in place.

Spotlight on: Women's Sport

Women's sport has seen a huge increase in profile over the past five years, bolstered by landmark sporting achievements on the biggest stages, such as England winning the UEFA Women's European Championships in 2022. However, there is more work to do to ensure that the growth in interest translates into sustainable growth for women's sport, and a closing of the participation gap between men and women.



Women's sport should be front and centre alongside men's sport, and not in the background as it has been historically. Women are over half of the population, and yet are under-served by, and under-represented in, sport. Expanding women's sport, with growing demand and some investors seeing it as a better long-term bet, is the main untapped future growth area for many sports. The government wants action taken and is prepared to get heavily involved to ensure this happens, working across sectors to help create the conditions for change.

Our desire is not necessarily for women's sport to be a carbon copy of men's sport. Women's sport has developed in its own way, been influenced by different factors and has different opportunities for growth open to it. What we want to see is women's sport and our fantastic female athletes being given the appropriate support to flourish, inspire and be respected.

Women's sport was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a slow return, lack of media coverage and a loss of sponsorship deals which women's sport has historically found difficult to attract in the first place. Arguably, this fragility has resulted from decades of underinvestment, leaving it more vulnerable to shocks in the system and viewed as peripheral to 'core business'. It is unacceptable that investment in women's sport is routinely the first to be cut when times are tough, with sponsorship deals withdrawn and a loss to revenue where seasons were cancelled, as was the case during the pandemic, despite men's competitions being able to go ahead. The visibility and profile of women's sport across all forms of media is still limited. Women in sport frequently receive sexist and misogynistic comments and abuse, and this compounds the fact that there aren't enough women and girls involved in sport, whether participating, in the workforce or at board level.

The 2022 UEFA Women's Euros Championships demonstrated how much progress has been made, and what can be achieved when all partners come together. This has not happened by accident, but is the result of sustained investment from both public and commercial sources, and a clear plan from The FA. We saw how media coverage and sponsorship opportunities amplify investment in players and facilities to deliver an unprecedented event. A record crowd of more than 87,000 attended the final, the highest attended match at either a men's or women's European Championship. England's win united the nation and cemented the team's status as role models for a new generation. But the success of the Lionesses must be more than that – it is an opportunity to supercharge women's and girls' sport. We want to make sure everyone has the ability to follow their sporting dreams, is treated fairly, and can show their support for women's sport as easily as they can for men's sport.



In an environment where commercial investment and media coverage has been negatively impacted, it is important to remain proactive on reducing barriers to participation and commercial growth. For us, that includes protecting the sporting integrity of women's competitive sport, at both elite and grassroots level, with fairness at its core.

The UK sports councils published transgender inclusion guidance for domestic sports in 2021, which concluded that balancing transgender inclusion, safety and fairness at all times is not possible in every sport. This is due to retained differences in strength, stamina and physique between the average woman compared with the average person registered male at birth, with or without testosterone suppression. Competitive fairness cannot be reconciled with self-identification into the female category in gender-affected sport.

When it comes to competitive sport, particularly women's sport, the government believes that fairness and safety have to be the primary considerations. We are clear that a way forward is needed that protects and shows compassion to all athletes, while being clear that the integrity of sporting competition must be maintained.

We want to see greater change, and for women's sport to be treated as a priority at all levels. We need to be prepared to take advantage of opportunities, find ways to overcome challenges, and work with partners to create the right conditions for change. This strategy comes at the start of the UK's hosting of the International Working Group on Women in Sport (IWG) between 2022 and 2026, where the UK's vision is to create a 'just and sustainable post-pandemic world where women and girls play a full and equitable role'. Our aims are aligned to this vision, namely to increase participation, visibility and investment in women's sport – three interconnected areas that together will help create system-wide change.

To help increase participation we will continue our support of Sport England's targeted work to drive up activity levels for under-represented groups such as women and girls, with a particular focus on those who face the biggest barriers.



Recognising the important impact that school sport can have on perceptions of sport and physical activity, we will focus on improving girls' experiences of PE and school sport. This will concentrate on driving up the quality of PE lessons and ensuring equality of opportunities for girls and boys, with the refreshed School Sport and Activity Action Plan setting this out in further detail.

We have also carried out an in-depth review of women's football to look at developing the women's game at elite and grassroots level, for instance, through our UK-wide £300 million+ capital investment into building grassroots sports facilities which target under-represented groups – including women and girls, people from ethnic minority groups and people on low incomes. We will use the findings of this review to draw out best practices and lessons learned that will be of value to women and girls participating in all sports – not just football.



We will work with the sector to help them attract new sources of investment, including by exploring what more can be done to foster greater links between women's sport and major investors. We will also ask those sports that received Sport Survival Package business and governance transformation investment to demonstrate how this investment is being used to develop women's professional sport, where commitments have been made. Business transformation work includes revenue diversification, asset optimisation, customer/fan engagement, management operation and efficiency, amongst other areas.

To help increase the visibility of women's sport we will continue to support and champion the UK's hosting of major women's sporting events. We will do this by looking to secure a balanced pipeline of events across the coming decade and beyond. We will ensure that men's sporting events also seek to benefit women and girls. We will also use the UK's hosting of the IWG on Women and Sport over 2022-2026 to drive awareness of our work on women's sport, and share and benefit from insight and learning across the globe.

Together, these actions will help build on the gains made in recent years across women's sport, so that all women's sport continues to thrive.

2.1 The power of elite and professional sport

So far, this strategy has focused largely on the benefits and challenges around helping to create a more active nation. For most of us, being physically active or taking part in grassroots sport is as far as we will go in terms of sporting prowess. However, it is the elite and professional side of sport that our most talented athletes aspire to be part of, and which has a unique power to bring communities and indeed the nation together.

The UK successfully hosted a wide range of sporting events in 2022, including the UEFA Women's European Championships, the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and the Rugby League World Cup. A poll after the Birmingham Commonwealth Games revealed that half of the people in the UK said they had watched, followed online, or taken part in the event in some way. The same research showed that nearly 80% of those asked agreed that the Games had given people the opportunity to celebrate, and two-thirds said that events like this make them feel proud of the UK. We will continue our support for hosting major sporting events in this country, providing opportunities to showcase sport to large audiences, engage local communities and drive economic activity. We continue to develop a strong pipeline of major sporting events that reflects both sporting and government priorities, and maximises the expertise that this country has to offer.

The support that the government and UK Sport can provide to support the bidding for and staging of events is set out in the *Gold Framework*, newly updated for 2023 alongside this strategy. The government and UK Sport identify priority events and themes to support, including a focus on women's and disability sport events and environmental sustainability. It underlines how a societal impact and legacy programme is an integral part of staging any such event. The Framework also emphasises the requirement for event hosts to ensure that the needs of all spectators, including disabled people, are considered from the earliest stages of bidding and throughout the delivery process, so that everyone can have a positive experience. Staging these events allows the UK to lead the world in these areas, to inspire people at home to come together as a nation, and to become more active themselves. We must therefore ensure that this work is underpinned by the right support, structures and governance to maximise all these benefits.



We have also taken steps to protect the profile of top-level disability and women's sport. We recently added the Paralympic Games, the FIFA Women's World Cup and the UEFA Women's European Championships to the Listed Events Regime, which will ensure these events remain available to free-to-air broadcasters in the future. We were also proud to host the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games which had the largest parasport programme of any Commonwealth Games; it also offered more medal opportunities for women than men.

Arguably, the pinnacle of elite sport is the Olympic and Paralympic Games every four years. Research shows that 70% of the UK's population tunes in to watch our nation's athletes at the Games, and 72% of the country feel a sense of pride when they succeed.³⁶ We also know that Olympic and Paralympic sport plays an important role in ensuring the future sustainability and viability of the sporting system. The Games drive fan engagement and public interest in sport, and therefore help to secure the future relevance of the industry in the UK. These are vital benefits that underpin the sporting system and which the government is uniquely placed to support. Hosting World and European Championships in Olympic and Paralympic sports in the UK will continue to be a key element of our strategy to develop world-class athletes, and maintain this high level of achievement.

UK Sport's approach to funding elite sport has enabled British athletes to excel at recent Games. The success of this approach is evident both in the numbers of medals won and also the range of sports in which our athletes have succeeded. This was demonstrated at Tokyo 2020, where Team GB won 64 medals in 25 disciplines and ParalympicsGB won 124 medals across a record-breaking 18 sports. We intend to continue our commitment to our Olympic and Paralympic athletes, ensuring UK Sport continues to have sufficient funding to support the elite sport system and our most talented athletes. The government has committed to providing £232 million to support preparation for the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games to back aspiring Team GB and ParalympicsGB athletes as well as their coaches and support staff, in addition to funding from the National Lottery. This is in support of UK Sport's stated ambition for our teams to remain in the top 5 of the medal tables of the summer Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris 2024, and beyond.



Sport has a profile and visibility that any brand would crave. As a result, shared global sporting successes can promote a sense of national identity and pride, and even inspire some young people to emulate the success of their heroes. When our athletes and teams step out onto the sports field, we want them to truly represent the very best of our nation, in all its diversity. Their profile and successes should showcase the opportunities and support available to enable aspiring participants to fulfil their potential, irrespective of their background or circumstances.

The impact of this could transcend the high-performance system into community sport, and ultimately the nation beyond. This is the power and profile of performance sport. This aspiration starts with ensuring that National Governing Body (NGB) pathways are accessible and inclusive, and connected with the school, club and community sport provision that precedes and surrounds them. Our arm's length bodies, Sport England and UK Sport, will commit to assessing progress against these ambitions, fostering collaboration and sharing evidence and learnings from across the system to better understand how the sector can realise this aspiration.

This will ensure that public funding not only helps everyone to get active, but is there to support our most talented athletes realise their full potential, regardless of background or location. We need to ensure that our high-performance sport is an option for everyone, and then that we deliver at the very highest level. Sport is a calling card of the UK, and our Olympians and Paralympians lead the way in punching above our weight at the Games. We need to back them, to allow them to fulfil their potential and inspire future generations.



Spotlight on: Disability Sport

Over recent years the profile and public recognition of elite-level disability sport has grown hugely. From the increased breadth and depth of Paralympics coverage on television and in the media, to the growth in the number of high-profile disabled sports stars, to the increased commercial investment; these are all positive trends that we want to support. We have also used our support for major sporting events to promote disability sport – the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games included the largest ever parasport programme in Commonwealth Games history; a major show of support for the parasport agenda.

We will continue to fund our top-level athletes through UK Sport investment, so we can support people to realise their sporting potential and represent the country on the biggest stages. We have already added the Paralympic Games to the Listed Events Regime, which will ensure the Games remain available to free-to-air broadcasters in the future. We want the sector to continue to tap into the potential of disability sport in terms of broadcast and live audiences, media coverage and commercial opportunities, so that it can grow its reach and build stronger foundations for future generations.

However, we also know that participation in sport and physical activity by disabled people is well below the levels for non-disabled people, and that is a situation that needs to improve to ensure everyone can enjoy the health and other benefits that it offers. Underlying structural issues are at play here, with challenges around infrastructure and transport being just a few of the barriers that can prevent disabled people from more easily accessing sport and physical activity. But the sport sector also has a role. Sport England's Moving Social Work programme is one example of work being done to tackle this disparity, helping social workers promote physical activity to disabled people.

For too long, disability sport, and inclusion and accessibility for disabled spectators, have been considered additional add-ons, rather than part of mainstream provision. This is changing, for example disability inclusion in competitive school sport has been transformed through the School Games and the School Games Organisers inclusion health check. However, we need the sport sector to ensure that disabled people have access to the support they need to be active or spectate at sport, and to make sure the sector is equipped to provide people with a great experience. We also expect any bids to host major sporting events which are seeking government support to provide evidence that accessibility has been considered from the earliest stage and that there is commitment to inclusion. We need to continue the journey towards inclusion at all levels of sport to ensure everyone has the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of being active.

2.2 Winning well

We believe safe and supportive environments can help people achieve their best. UK Sport, our arm's length body for the funding of elite sport, has been strongly pushing this as a priority in recent years. Protecting and promoting the welfare of athletes and those working in sport is a fundamental building block of success, and has to be at the heart of everything the sector does. The sector is alive to these issues and is making continual improvements to strengthen safeguards, make it easier for best practice to be shared and for any issues to be identified. However, where there are challenges that sport cannot solve alone, the government has an important role in supporting change.

We remain fully committed to UK Sport's vision of continuing to win internationally whilst also "winning well". The work of UK Anti-Doping (UKAD) is pivotal to ensuring fair play. As the national body responsible for keeping sport clean and fair, their work upholds the belief that a healthy sporting nation, based on fair play and integrity, reflects a healthy society. Their educational activity for elite athletes, coaches and other support personnel and their focused campaigns to protect clean sport, such as '100% me', encourage athletes to be the best they can be while supporting individual and team integrity.

Organised sport is defined by the spirit of competition and the desire to win. In and of itself, there is nothing wrong with this – the pressure of wanting to perform well spurs players and athletes on to deliver their best, and to devote themselves to demanding training regimes.

However, without the right checks and balances, these same pressures can lead to environments where the desire to win or to get selected takes on an overwhelming importance, to the extent that behaviours which would otherwise be considered unacceptable are considered normal. This can manifest itself in unhealthy and extreme training regimes, bullying and abusive behaviour. While we want our athletes to succeed, this should not come at the expense of their welfare and long-term wellbeing. We therefore support UK Sport's work to provide additional scrutiny and support around welfare for elite athletes and support staff in publicly funded NGBs, and hope that lessons can be learned for the whole of the sector.



2.3 Complaint handling and dispute resolution

The responsibilities of sports organisations and the government around integrity issues have come under increased scrutiny over recent years, with serious allegations of misconduct coming to light. These have tended to focus on issues relating to culture and safeguarding, such as in cricket, gymnastics, football and cycling.

Common themes in recent cases include the lack of confidence amongst complainants that sports will investigate allegations properly and a fear that they will be penalised for raising concerns, the fact that NGBs and other sports organisations are often under-resourced to carry out investigations, particularly where cases are complex, and the perceived lack of appropriate action taken as a result of investigations.

Together, these problems have meant that individuals have often been reluctant to come forward with complaints, or they have become disillusioned with the outcomes and left the sport. The results of this are two-fold: misconduct has been allowed to continue unchallenged, causing harm and distress for individuals in the sport; and the reputation of sport is tarnished when allegations emerge, discouraging others from participating in the future.

It cannot be assumed that the recent troubling reports about welfare are temporary and limited to a few sports. There is an increasing body of research to indicate that discrimination is present throughout the system, which we continue to engage with and follow closely. Investigations into high profile complaints suggest ingrained cultural issues that have developed over many years.

Personal stories of abuse and bullying within sport have been heartbreaking and distressing. We must not shy away from the difficult challenges that the sector is facing. We owe it to those who have shared their painful experiences to listen and improve for future generations. Indeed, it is vitally important that people feel able to come forward with their concerns.

The sector is taking steps to explore increased independence in the system for handling complaints, and in helping NGBs and other sports organisations to fulfil their roles as both promoters and regulators. UK Sport has launched a pilot of a new complaints handling service, 'Sport Integrity', targeted at roles within the Olympic and Paralympic levels of the sport system, the use of which is now mandatory for sports funded by UK Sport. This is a positive step forward. It introduces greater independence into the system by moving complaint handling away from NGBs, and will hopefully increase confidence that concerns will be investigated robustly and judged fairly. It will also create additional capacity and capability by having appropriately skilled staff carrying out investigations, and reduce the need for NGBs to be concerned about the costs or practicalities of handling complaints.

Sport England is also expanding its Safeguarding Case Management Service for grassroots sport. This was established in 2019 to help organisations access expert support for safeguarding concerns and referrals. After an initial pilot with 9 NGBs, Sport England is extending the support on offer to up to 50 NGBs.

However, we want to be sure that the system is as strong as possible, so that any complaints and concerns can be raised at the earliest opportunity, and acted on appropriately. There have been calls for the government to establish a new independent complaints service, or ombudsman, for sport to act as a point of escalation for complaints in the sporting sector. We agree that steps need to be taken to improve substantially how concerns and grievances are dealt with in the sector. We want people to be able to come forward with confidence that their complaints will be heard and investigated appropriately.

In order to determine what changes are needed that will best help the UK sport sector, we intend to start by getting a better understanding of the current system, place a greater emphasis on transparency around sport integrity issues, and identify opportunities for improvement. Crucially, we need to ensure that we are developing the right solutions for the right problems.

We already have an example of how independence within the sporting system can be effective, with the creation of UKAD in 2009 as the independent national body responsible for keeping sport clean and fair. It acts as a centre of excellence for anti-doping, with responsibility for ensuring sports bodies in the UK meet their anti-doping requirements and comply with the World Anti-Doping Code. We also know how important education and awareness raising can be for participants and those in the workforce, so that people have a shared understanding of unacceptable behaviours, their rights and responsibilities, and know what to do if they have concerns.

We now look to focus our efforts on these other aspects of sport integrity, including wider complaints handling. We will monitor the progress of the Sport Integrity pilot to understand the impact it has on improving complaint handling at the Olympic and Paralympic level. We will also monitor the progress of Sport England's expanded safeguarding case management service to understand the impact on NGBs' safeguarding processes for the grassroots level.

We have started work with three of our arm's length bodies, UK Sport, Sport England and UKAD, to identify the most pressing sport integrity challenges facing the sector and the opportunities to ensure the UK remains at the forefront of global efforts around fairness and inclusion. We will continue to work collaboratively with them and the wider sector to identify potential improvements, including how processes around complaint handling and dispute resolution can be strengthened. As a first step, **we are launching a call for evidence alongside this strategy to get views from the sector and the general public about how integrity matters are currently handled, and what needs to improve.** This evidence will help inform decisions about the best course of action, whether that be amending current structures or establishing new ones. For the reasons set out above, if action is needed then the government will intervene in this space.



2.4 Safety and welfare

The safety, wellbeing and welfare of everyone taking part in sport is absolutely paramount. We want people to enjoy being active and taking part in sport, and this is undermined if people are mistreated or if standards of behaviour are neglected. Parents and carers will not want to take their children to sport clubs if they feel that safety is being compromised, and people of all ages will turn away from sport if they feel their welfare isn't the top priority.

Sport, and particularly competitive sport, will inspire some individuals to push their physical and psychological limits. However, there is nothing more important than the safety and wellbeing of people taking part in, volunteering and working in the sport and physical activity sector – no medal, trophy or prize is worth the sacrifice of people's welfare. That principle should run throughout the system, from a local community run at the weekend through to elite levels of sport.

NGBs are rightly responsible for the running of their sports and for ensuring that appropriate measures are in place to protect participants from harm. With that in mind, we expect sports to do all they can to protect their workforce, volunteers and participants.

We also recognise that the government has an important role in driving this agenda across the sector. At the most fundamental level, we want to ensure people benefit from being active and taking part in sport. If this is not happening, we need to take action. Where the sector benefits from public funding, we also need to ensure this is being used in the right way, and that the pursuit of results is not overriding the basic considerations of fairness and welfare.

Numerous pieces of work are in train or planned to help the sector become safer. UKAD's work is focused on ensuring a level playing field for competition, as well as protecting the safety and welfare of athletes. In addition to the Sport Integrity service mentioned earlier becoming mandatory for all UK Sport-funded NGBs, and the expansion of Sport England's case management service, the two organisations have announced a raft of commitments around safeguarding, culture and governance. These include reviewing safeguarding standards and assurance processes used by sport to ensure they are effective in creating safe environments, and in providing assurance to funders. Sport England will also seek to increase support for sport safeguarding leads by funding a national network of local and regional welfare officers. These officers will work with NGBs and their network of local clubs to promote good practice and safe sport on a local level.

Both organisations are also committed to strengthening support and structures around sports coaching, to ensure this part of the sport system has access to dedicated guidance and governance. This will include establishing a new independent representative organisation for coaches to provide leadership and support. The Chartered Institute for Management in Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) will also work with the sector to deliver more structured career pathways for coaches, underpinned by a broader curriculum which encompasses non-technical skills. In addition, CIMSPA will work with UK Sport, Sport England and NGBs to develop a new national registration scheme for coaches.

We recognise there are challenges. Standards and policies aren't enough on their own – they need to be put into practice and brought to life. Given the importance of safety in sport, the government will continue to oversee how issues are managed and the progress being made, and will work with the sector to ensure safety and welfare is core to sport and physical activity.

Concussion in Sport

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) published a Command Paper on Concussion in Sport in December 2021, outlining the steps the government is taking to help reduce risks associated with head injuries in sport.³⁷ Work is focusing on improving understanding, awareness, prevention and treatment of concussion in sport, and aims to:

- ensure research is as robust as possible and that the findings lead to meaningful behaviour change;
- improve awareness levels about preventing and managing concussion at all levels of sport; and
- harness technology to rapidly increase understanding and improve concussion outcomes.

DCMS is now working with partners from across the sport, health, education, academic and technology sectors to take forward our concussion in sport policy. In April 2023, the government and the Sport and Recreation Alliance launched UK-wide concussion guidelines to help create a shared understanding of concussion and the action to take, regardless of the level or type of sport being played.³⁸ An expert panel has also been convened to explore technological solutions to aid player safety, as well as a new sports concussion research forum to identify the research questions that need answering in this important area.

The government remains committed to working with sports stakeholders to build on the positive work on concussion and brain injury that is already taking place. The ambition is to mitigate the causes and effects of concussion for the benefit of everyone at all levels who wish to take part in and enjoy sport.



37 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-response-to-the-digital-culture-media-and-sport-select-committee-report-on-concussion-in-sport>

38 <https://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/policy/research-publications/concussion-guidelines>

2.5 Discrimination

Sport is a high-profile part of our culture and touches the lives of millions of people everyday, whether that's being part of a local team, reading the latest sports headlines or watching a match at the weekend. It can provoke public debate itself, or serve as a platform to shine a light on important topics such as diversity and inclusion. Sport stars can help shape public opinion and draw attention to issues beyond the world of sport. In short, sport has the potential to be a powerful force for social debate and positive change.

This same spotlight means that issues and failings receive equally high levels of public attention. All too frequently we have seen examples of discrimination in the sector, whether from spectators, players or those involved in the running of sports. This reflects society; discrimination exists in society, and it is understandable that it exists in sport as well. However, that does not change the fact that it is abhorrent and absolutely unacceptable. It is incumbent on sport to take action to promote inclusion and tackle discrimination when it is identified, particularly when it has such an influential role in society and, in some cases, is in receipt of valuable public funding.

There is no place for discrimination, at any level, within sport or wider society. Acts of discrimination, be it racism, sexism, discrimination against disabled people or homophobia, lead to already under-represented groups feeling that sport is unwelcoming and even unsafe. In our drive to tackle inactivity and increase diversity within all parts of the sport sector, discrimination remains a threat to the future of sport, undermining confidence and creating an environment that no one wants to be a part of.

As government, we want to be proactive in tackling discrimination and setting the standard for the sector. We want to ensure that the future of sport at all levels, from grassroots through to elite, is protected and that it remains a safe and welcoming space for people from all backgrounds. We want sport to lead the way in tackling discrimination, using its high profile to promote values of inclusion and community. Sports teams that reflect the diversity of their communities, or of the nation in the case of international competition, are powerful demonstrations of the positive role that inclusion can play.



Online Harms

In July 2021 the then Prime Minister set out action to tackle online racist abuse in football and sport following the abhorrent social media attacks on black England players after the Euro 2020 final. The government has amended legislation to extend the use of Football Banning Orders so online abusers can be banned from stadia for up to 10 years.

In recent years the scale and prevalence of abuse online has been unacceptable. The government has taken this very seriously and is clear that online platforms should never be a refuge for abusive, harmful or criminal behaviour. That is why the government is introducing laws which will usher in a new era of accountability for the tech sector.

Under the Online Safety Bill, tech companies in scope will have to ensure that illegal content is removed expeditiously. This includes illegal racist abuse and discrimination. These companies will have to set out clearly what legal content accessed by adults is acceptable on their platforms and enforce their terms and conditions consistently and transparently. If major platforms don't fulfil their own promises to users, they could face an investigation and enforcement action.

Discrimination is a complex issue; it is not just for the government to tackle alone. Everybody in the sector has a part to play. NGBs are responsible for the running of their sports. They must uphold their own standards around anti-discrimination and show leadership in tackling any wrongful treatment of participants in their sport.

Government's arm's length bodies for sport, principally Sport England and UK Sport, also have roles to play in helping the sector understand the common issues across sport and physical activity, and how these can be addressed. This includes working with sports to ensure our pool of talented athletes, and Team GB and ParalympicsGB athletes who are selected from this group, fully represent the breadth of UK geography and society. We want to see the talent pipeline continue to broaden and become more geographically and demographically diverse. The Home Country Sports Councils can also direct funding towards projects that tackle disparities, as with Sport England's Together Fund, which aims to reduce disparities exacerbated by the pandemic. Crucially, the government's arm's length bodies provide funding to sports' NGBs, and should hold them accountable to these standards on the back of that.

An example of their work was the June 2021 publication by UK Sport, Sport England and the other Home Country Sports Councils of the "Tackling Racism and Racial Inequality in Sport" report.³⁹ The report made clear that racism and racial disparities still exist within sport in the UK and that there are long-standing issues. The review agreed on five overarching commitments that have involved working closely with relevant groups or communities to co-create solutions for real, lasting change and to earn trust. The Home Country Sports Councils' action plans have been shared publicly to help support the sports sector and bring about collective action and change. The actions include reviewing the gaps in the analysis from children through to workforce, creating participants' working groups, as well as the publication of strategy implementation plans heavily informed by the review's research. Sport England and UK Sport will assess progress against these five overarching commitments on a

39 https://www.sportengland.org/campaigns-and-our-work/equality-and-diversity?section=race_in_sport_review#readthereportsinfull-14194

biannual basis and share learnings across the sector so they do more to create fair, welcoming, diverse and inclusive experiences for all.

We support this work, and the steps taken by organisations of all sizes across the sector to address discrimination and ensure that sport is welcoming to everyone. As government, we will use our convening power and voice to champion positive activity to make sport and physical activity more inclusive. We will also not hesitate to publicly hold sports organisations to account for failings and any lack of progress, and reserve the right to consider financial sanctions and withholding support for bids for hosting major sporting events.

We will also advocate for the rights of fans who experience hostile environments at sporting events, both at home and abroad, to ensure that everyone can enjoy following their chosen sport safely and without fear of prejudice. We expect to see clear and sustained evidence of cultural change across sports from the perspectives of participants, spectators and the workforce alike to create a sector that everyone can enjoy being a part of.



2.6 Doping and corruption

It is essential that the government, arm's length bodies and sports continue to work together to protect clean and fair sport in the UK. People, whether competitors or spectators, rightly expect sport to be played in the spirit of fair competition – cheating, whether through doping or other fraudulent means, undermines this. By ensuring public confidence in the legitimacy of sport, we retain its power to engage and inspire. We also protect the value of the UK's substantial investment in sport and we uphold values of fairness that are so important to our national identity domestically and on the international stage.

The government will continue to support the vital work of UKAD in our shared pursuit of clean sport. Together, we have made important progress since the publication of *Sporting Future*. With UKAD's support, the government published an updated National Anti-Doping Policy in 2021, satisfying our obligations under the UNESCO Convention Against Doping in Sport, and ensuring that the World Anti-Doping Code remains implemented effectively in the UK. The Policy sets out the roles and responsibilities around anti-doping activities in the UK and was launched alongside UKAD's new Assurance Framework. Through this independent regulatory mechanism, NGBs are able to evidence to UKAD that they are meeting anti-doping requirements to be deemed compliant with the Policy.

UKAD's purpose is to ensure doping-free sport, promoting and protecting clean sport through education, testing, investigations and enforcement. Insight into doping and its threat to sport is central to what UKAD does, using an intelligence-led approach to deter and detect wrongdoing. Confronted with constant evolution in doping methods and technology, we are committed to empowering UKAD to safeguard clean sport in the UK and to retain its reputation as a world-leading national anti-doping organisation. This includes continued consideration of the appropriate framework for UKAD to meet its obligation under the World Anti-Doping Code to "obtain, assess and process anti-doping intelligence from all available sources".

We will also continue to engage with international partners on other matters relating to the integrity of sport, including through our position as a founding member of the International Partnership Against Corruption in Sport. Related to this, the UK signed the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (the 'Macolin Convention') in December 2018. The Macolin Convention aims to combat match-fixing and encourages sports organisations and competition organisers to put appropriate measures in place to do so, such as adopting principles of good governance and educating athletes. In Great Britain, this work is led by the Gambling Commission's Sports Betting Intelligence Unit (SBIU), which works closely with the betting industry, NGBs and the police to understand potential threats and help protect the integrity of sport and betting. **We will now look to ratify the Macolin Convention, to further demonstrate the government's commitment to tackle match-fixing and to maintain our position as an international leader in ensuring the integrity of sport.**



2.7 Governance

Good governance is the bedrock upon which the sector stands. It is fundamental to ensuring transparency, accountability and fairness in the sport and physical activity sector.

One of the key actions from Sporting Future was to establish the Code for Sports Governance, bringing in a clear set of standards across the sector. Our arm's length bodies, Sport England and UK Sport, launched the Code in 2016, setting out the levels of transparency, diversity and inclusion, accountability and integrity required from organisations receiving public funding. This also applies to organisations delivering major sporting events with government support.

Since its launch more than 4,000 organisations now adhere to the Code across varying levels within the system. It has provided a standard framework of governance for a wide and diverse range of sporting bodies across the nation, including charities and community groups that deliver sport and physical activity opportunities. A review of organisations using the Code indicated 87% were finding it generally helpful for their organisation, with the most impactful areas being improved board diversity and term lengths. Organisations said the compliance process felt 'rigorous' and 'supportive'. There was also evidence that the Code had helped contribute to improved diversity in the sector – a board diversity audit showed that representations on boards since 2018 rose by 4% for women, 8% for those with a declared disability, 3% for people from ethnic minority groups and 2% for LGBT people, all of which are statistically significant increases.⁴⁰

After three years of assessing progress with the Code it was clear that it was time to review and update the Code to ensure it remained relevant, world-leading, and addressed new challenges being faced by the sector.



40 <https://www.sportengland.org/news/changes-made-strengthen-code-sports-governance>

In June 2020 the then Minister for Sport called for a review of the Code by Sport England and UK Sport with a particular emphasis on accessibility and equality of opportunity. The review process involved extensive consultation with governance experts and partners across the sport and physical activity sector, a review of wider governance best practice, and drew on the organisations' practical experience of applying the Code since its introduction.

The updated Code was published in 2021 and introduced a requirement for organisations in receipt of significant public funding to agree a diversity and inclusion action plan (DIAP) with Sport England and/or UK Sport, to be published and updated annually. This includes organisations set up to deliver major sporting events that receive substantial public funds. Boards will also now be required to appoint a Welfare and Safety lead director on their boards in response to heightened concerns around welfare and safety in sport and physical activity.

Organisations in the sport and physical activity sector are working with Sport England and UK Sport to implement the requirements of the updated Code. We will monitor the impact these changes have on the sector, particularly in terms of the effectiveness of DIAPs in increasing accessibility and equality of opportunity across the sector and at all levels of sport to ensure organisations represent their relevant local communities. We stand ready to hold sports to account for their progress and to do all we can to ensure the sector continues to uphold the highest governance standards.

What this will mean

- For government, this plan will mean that the government focuses on improving standards around integrity in sport, including actively looking at options to deliver wholesale change. We will call out issues when they arise and hold the sector to account for them. Alongside this, we will support our elite athletes and ensure that the UK continues to have a world-leading reputation on integrity and anti-doping.
- For the sector, this will mean continued focus on improving governance and tackling issues as they arise, but also government support in working out the long-term plan around capacity, capability and independence to tackle these issues. For the elite part of the sector, including anti-doping, this will mean ongoing government support to carry the flag as the best of the UK on the world-stage.
- For the country, this will mean that people can have greater confidence that fewer issues will occur due to good governance, and that, when they do, processes are in place to report them and address them early. It will mean a greater focus on making sport as positive an environment as it can be so that it feels like there is a place for everyone, whatever someone's age, ability or background. For those who want to, people should be able to see a pathway and place for themselves in representing their country.

Summary

Actions:

Elite sport

- We will continue our support of Olympic and Paralympic sport through funding of UK Sport.

Diversity

- We will support efforts to tackle discrimination across the sector and holding organisations to account for failings in this area.
- We will use opportunities presented through our support of hosting major sporting events, encouraging the sector to focus on the diversity of talent pathways.

Governance

- Alongside UK Sport and Sport England we will continue to monitor the impact of the revised Governance Code on the sector, particularly in terms of the effectiveness of Diversity and Inclusion Action Plans in increasing accessibility and equality of opportunity across the sector and at all levels of sport.

Doping and corruption

- We will ensure UK Anti-Doping continues to have the appropriate framework to carry out effective investigations, in line with evolving challenges.
- The UK will ratify the Macolin Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions.

Complaint handling and dispute resolution

- We will launch a call for evidence to understand current experiences, and work with the sector to decide how the prevention and handling of integrity issues could be strengthened.

Chapter 3:

Making sport more sustainable



Chapter 3:

Making sport more sustainable

SUMMARY

Our objective is to move towards a more sustainable sector that is more financially resilient and robust. We will do this by:

- **Supporting the sector to access additional, alternative forms of investment** to help it continue to grow and thrive, and by highlighting best practice, good governance mechanisms, and opportunities offered by technology and innovation. This will allow sport to thrive for future generations, and support the continuation of our sporting institutions.
- **Working towards a more environmentally sustainable sector** that delivers on the government's net-zero ambitions. We will do this by championing the role that sport can play in sustainability, and bringing together government departments, the sport sector and subject matter experts to share information and provide support.

Introduction

Recent years have highlighted some of the fragilities of the sport system. The COVID-19 pandemic hit the finances of the sector hard, and saw the government provide unprecedented financial support to keep the sector afloat. This was necessary in order to preserve the sporting ecosystem that is so essential in enabling individuals to get active and for elite performance to continue.

Despite this support, we have also seen how damaging the failure of a beloved sports club can be on its fans and local community. This has been most evident in professional football, with over 60 clubs going into administration since 1992. In addition to the huge impact of COVID-19 on clubs' already fragile finances, the unrealised plan for a breakaway European Super League threatened the fundamental tenets of the football pyramid. These events have only strengthened the case for reform and the need to protect historic clubs. That is why the government considered it critical to look at how football clubs could be put on a sustainable footing, as reflected in its 2019 manifesto commitment to conduct a Fan-Led Review of Football Governance and explored in the recently published white paper on this issue.^{41 42}

The impacts of climate change are also being seen across the sector, with extreme temperatures, flooding, and rising sea levels already affecting sporting infrastructure, player welfare and fan discomfort; cumulatively threatening how, and even if, sport and physical activity can take place in some circumstances. The threat to participation in sport and physical activity, posed by the impacts of our changing climate, is a fundamental, long-term challenge facing the sport system that requires action now.

The twin challenges of economic constraints and a changing climate are ones that are leading the sector to greater innovation and forward planning. Technology is a central driver of growth

41 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fan-led-review-of-football-governance-securing-the-games-future>

42 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-sustainable-future-reforming-club-football-governance>

that can enable a more sustainable and resilient sport sector, with the potential to transform the way we stay active. Sport has a unique position to capitalise on economic opportunities and technological developments that may not exist for other sectors, and sustainable growth and innovation of the sport sector can drive economic benefits for local areas, as well as the national economy. Our goal in government is to support these efforts and enable the sector to put itself in the best position for the years ahead.

Our country needs and deserves a sports sector which is resilient, efficient and robust; one which is financially secure and environmentally sustainable, and will endure future challenges, so that as many people as possible can continue to benefit from the positive outcomes sport and physical activity can offer.



3.1 Economic sustainability

The economic value of the sport sector

The government's previous Sport Satellite Account estimated that the Gross Value Added (GVA) of the sport sector in 2019 was **£48.9 billion**. This marked an increase of 2.9% between 2018 and 2019 and of 20.4% between 2010 and 2019, in real terms.⁴³

From the long history of professional football, through to innovative approaches such as The Hundred in cricket, sport in the UK has a world-class reputation and a reach that extends across the globe. Sport plays an important role in the economy, and the value of the sector, both in terms of economic and social value, cannot be understated. The sector contributes to the economy in two ways: both directly, through contribution to GVA, and indirectly by reducing the burden on other areas of the economy, for example fewer demands on healthcare services thanks to a healthier population. In these ways, sport is critical for helping solve key issues facing our society today, such as helping to grow the national economy and relieving the burden on the NHS.

Despite this, the sector has been significantly adversely impacted by COVID-19. Across Europe, the long-term impact of the pandemic across the sport sector may result in a drop of almost €60 billion (roughly £52 billion) in Gross Domestic Product and a loss of over a million employees.⁴⁴ The economic impact of COVID-19 reached all levels of the sector, with the 'Big Five' football leagues in Europe suffering estimated losses of £3.5 billion in total as a result of the pandemic.⁴⁵

The government is committed to supporting economic growth in the sector, and ensuring this translates into tangible outcomes that span grassroots participation through to elite performance. In turn, this can help stimulate the contribution sport makes to growing the national economy. We want a thriving sector, with strong National Governing Bodies (NGBs) that can use their nation-wide remit to deliver sport to people across the country.

Sport needs to continue to innovate, both through seeking diverse forms of investment but also by embracing the opportunities brought about through technology and innovation. We also have a particular responsibility to ensure that the public funding we provide to the sector has the maximum impact, and helps change as many lives as possible for the better. The market is already recognising the opportunity that investment in the sector provides, but we feel there is more to do to stimulate, encourage and tell the story of what long-term investment can offer. Where investment has been secured, there is also work to do to ensure the circularity of that investment, ensuring that benefits continue to be reinvested for the whole sporting entity, infrastructure or system.

43 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-economic-estimates-2019-gross-value-added/dcms-economic-estimates-2019-provisional-gross-value-added>

44 <https://www.ecorys.com/united-kingdom/latest-news/revealed-economic-impact-covid-19-uk-sport-industry-four-nations-may>

45 <https://researchfeatures.com/covid-19-impacts-future-challenges-sport-industry/>

Governance and regulation in the sector

It is vital that investment in sport leads to sustainable development for the sector. A key part of facilitating this is through ensuring there is good governance across the entirety of the sector.

The governance of football has been a particular focus over recent years. In 2021 the government commissioned a Fan-Led Review of Football and its governance, prompted by numerous examples of clubs experiencing financial difficulties, the failed attempt of the breakaway European Super League, and the associated reactions of fans.⁴⁶ The review, carried out by Tracey Crouch MP and published in November 2021, set out that poor corporate governance was a root cause for the game's problems, particularly through exacerbating financial mismanagement.⁴⁷ The review presented evidence that poor practices at some clubs have allowed owners to act unilaterally, with short-term interests, at the expense of the long-term interests and longevity of those clubs. Clubs can lack transparency and accountability on key decisions, and there can be insufficient independent voices and scrutiny to challenge decision-making. This has remained one of the key areas in ongoing conversations around reform.

In February 2023, the government published a white paper, affirming its commitment to introduce a new, independent regulator for English men's professional football.⁴⁸ This regulator will tackle a number of issues highlighted by the review, including financial sustainability and corporate governance. While unique to football and the systemic challenges it is facing, the government's white paper set out a blueprint that other sports might wish to follow around good business planning, strong corporate governance, and mechanisms to bring sport back on track when it drifts.

The Fan-Led Review also highlighted a number of issues worthy of greater exploration in the women's game. As a result, we have now published a separate in-depth review of women's football which makes strategic recommendations about what is needed to develop the women's game at elite and grassroots level.⁴⁹



46 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fan-led-review-of-football-governance-securing-the-games-future/fan-led-review-of-football-governance-securing-the-games-future>

47 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fan-led-review-of-football-governance-securing-the-games-future/fan-led-review-of-football-governance-securing-the-games-future>

48 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-sustainable-future-reforming-club-football-governance>

49 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-review-of-womens-football-published>

The Review of the Future of Women's Football was launched in September 2022 and chaired by former England and Great Britain footballer, Karen Carney MBE. The review considered extensive evidence from stakeholders across the women's football community, both via a call for written evidence and through wide-ranging stakeholder interviews. The review concluded that during a phase of immense growth there is an urgent need to ensure that basic processes and structures are in place which protect the interests of the game, and the people working in it. The government welcomes the work of the review and will now consider the recommendations, before providing a response in the autumn.

These pieces of work are specifically looking at football: the size of the sector of our 'national game', the magnitude of the issues, and the urgent need for reform which has been visible over many years has warranted specific attention. However, despite the focus on football, there will be universal governance and strategic principles that can be applied to different sports and areas of the sector. We will share these learnings to ensure that this work is of benefit to as much of the sector as possible.

Supporting future investment in the sector

The last decade has seen continued growth in a number of areas across sport with significant levels of new and innovative investment, particularly in women's sport (such as Barclays' investment of over £30 million in the Women's Super League).⁵⁰ However, much of the sector has operated with minimal financial contingencies for some time, a situation that was exposed and exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, and ultimately led to the need for the government to intervene with emergency funding.

The government's Sport Survival Package provided essential support over the course of the pandemic to cope with the impact of restrictions on spectators at live sporting events. This intervention was essential to ensure the survival of clubs and leagues through the pandemic, and indeed many clubs would have failed without this support. Whilst the conditions that led to this investment were unprecedented, the government wants to do more to support the sector to tackle the underlying fragilities that exist across sport, and to improve its financial sustainability.

The government encourages all parts of the sector to explore creative funding routes to enable delivery and investment in revenue generation capabilities, such as repayable finance and social impact investment opportunities.

Sport England – Social Impact Bonds

In 2019, Sport England launched the Chances Programme, co-developed with Substance, the Life Chances Fund and Big Issue Invest. The programme harnesses the power of sport to enhance the life chances of disadvantaged young people, and will support more than 6,000 people aged 8-17 across 21 locations in the UK over the next three years. Investment in the project comes from £1.25 million from the Big Issue Invest's Outcomes Investment Fund and Sport England's Social Impact Bond – a commissioning tool enabling organisations to deliver outcomes contracts and make funding for services conditional on achieving results.

50 <https://home.barclays/news/press-releases/2021/12/barclays-doubles-investment-in-women-s-and-girls-football-across/>

By exploring the opportunities that these forms of financing provide, more of the sector can take a longer term view of improving their financial resilience and ability to invest in new, innovative areas. We believe that there are also further opportunities within the sector as viable investment propositions for the right investors who are committed to the long-term growth and health of the sport. **The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) will also work with the Department for Business and Trade to highlight best practice and opportunities for inward investment into the domestic sport sector, including in women's sport.**

However, good governance is essential to ensure that these and other investments deliver sustainable value to participants, fans and key stakeholders alike. There is an opportunity to share learnings across the sector about what good governance and wider organisational health look like. This is part of UK Sport and Sport England's ambitions to help grow the sector, and make it more resilient and effective for the future. We will share best practice from the sector and learnings from the work delivered by UK Sport and Sport England in this area. The government also supports the work being undertaken by UK Sport as part of the System Master Plan Project to determine what long term reform might be required to the UK's Olympic and Paralympic sporting system, and will support the implementation of its recommendations.

UK Sport – organisational health tool

UK Sport have recently launched an organisational health tool which acts as a support and self-reflective tool to help sports bodies to better understand their own organisational health, whilst improving their resilience and growth. By providing guidance on four key components – strategy and growth, people and skills, standards and risks and relevance and impact – the tool will provide sports bodies, UK Sport and other partners with a greater understanding of governance structures and other key aspects of their organisation, in support of them being well-run, effective and sustainable sports bodies.

Reducing costs also plays a significant part in an organisation's financial sustainability. The government is also investing over £300 million across the UK to deliver new sports facilities or improve existing venues. Improving the quality of facilities will help promote financial sustainability at a local level, as these projects are to invest in a sinking fund (money set aside to cover any future work), so responsible organisations can replace pitches without any additional external investment at the end of their life cycle. This will help to reduce longer term facilities costs for organisations, allowing financial resources to be used for other priorities.



The importance of major sporting events

The benefits that major sporting events have on the economy and attracting investment to the UK cannot be overlooked either. The hosting of the 2022 events (excluding Commonwealth Games), had a direct economic impact of £132 million, supported 1,600 jobs and had a 6:1 return on investment. In addition, the short term impact alone of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games contributed almost £871 million GVA to the UK economy, with expectations for an even more positive impact to follow.⁵¹

Clear benefits such as these are why we are publishing an updated Gold Framework alongside this strategy, providing guidance on UK-level support available when bidding for and staging major sporting events. This is part of our strategic approach to ensuring we maximise the socio-economic benefits from major sporting events and other large events that form part of the sporting calendar. As part of bids for major sporting events, the government encourages host organisations to have a set plan and specific budget for social impact, such as improving participation in under-represented groups, support for facilities redevelopment, or wider community benefits.

Government recognises the world-leading expertise that exists in the UK and is keen to promote our governance systems and experience hosting world class major sporting events with other nations, and the trade opportunities this can bring.

Recognising and articulating the value of sport to the economy

Despite the significant value of the sport sector to the economy, we currently lack a clear and regular view of the data available that encapsulates its economic contribution and recognises its different constituent parts. We believe that there is real value to be provided by accurately capturing the economic value of sport in the UK and the growth and opportunities that exist within the sector as a whole. This is important, not only in terms of highlighting the contribution made by the sector, but also in acting as a tool to help encourage appropriate inward investment and showcase inter-connections with other sectors, such as hospitality, tourism and media. As such, **DCMS will deliver a new economic snapshot that articulates the economic value and growth opportunities that exist within sport in the UK.** This will replace the previous government Sport Satellite reporting mechanism.



51 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-birmingham-2022-commonwealth-games-interim-evaluation-report>

3.2 Technology, data and innovation

Technology is a central driver of growth and an enabler of a more sustainable and resilient sport sector. Whether it be by improving opportunities for people to participate in sport and physical activity, or by helping us to attain the highest possible standards in safety and integrity, technology has the potential to transform the way we stay active. The Digital Futures survey (2021), commissioned by UK Active and Sport England, found that 98% of fitness and leisure operators in the UK think digital will play an increasing role in the future.⁵² Innovation, including digital technology, can be transformative in making sport and physical activity more accessible and relevant.

The pandemic showed the innovative role that technology can play in supporting individuals to get active, with digital platforms helping people to keep moving when traditional avenues for participation were closed. Sport England's Innovation Open Call, launched at the start of the pandemic, discovered over 800 solutions that already existed to help people stay active, many of which were adapted to address specific challenges that the pandemic was highlighting. Furthermore, the sudden increase in the availability of online activity options also meant that individuals who had previously felt that exercise wasn't for them could find new options tailored to their needs.



52 <https://www.ukactive.com/reports/digital-futures-a-review-of-the-digital-maturity-and-digital-effectiveness-of-the-uks-fitness-and-leisure-sector/>

Case Study: Gate Access Technology and Tennis Courts

As part of a £30 million package announced in October 2021, including £21.9 million from the UK Government, DCMS has been working directly with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) to improve the accessibility of park tennis courts across Britain. This investment is bringing back to life thousands of existing park tennis courts in poor or unplayable condition across Great Britain, as well as making it easier to find, book, and get on court by installing new booking and entry systems. The gate access technology being installed improves user experience by enabling people to find a court online through the LTA website, which shows the availability of courts in their local area, addressing a key barrier to participation by allowing them to book a slot in advance and avoid having to wait for their turn on the day.

This model enables venues to control access to courts remotely, providing an economically efficient way to take bookings and payments, as well as schedule sessions at specific times, such as free tennis sessions where equipment is provided. By providing users with a unique entry code to input when they arrive at their pre-booked time, the technology also reduces the risk of unpermitted entry and subsequent vandalism to courts.

The online platform for finding and booking a court, coupled with gate access technology, demonstrates the power of digital technologies to create inclusive, time-efficient opportunities for communities to participate in sport, while protecting the accessibility and condition of facilities in the long-term.



Inclusivity is at the forefront of the government's commitment to help enhance the capabilities of the sector to realise the opportunities and benefits technological innovation can deliver for sport. It is critical that the sector works closely with intended audiences throughout the development and implementation of digital solutions to ensure that they cater to their specific needs as effectively as possible, with a specific focus on increasing digital inclusion. As such, **the government will work with both the technology and the sport sectors to help identify innovative, inclusive digital solutions which help increase participation and activity.**

Case Study: Inclusive Digital Interventions – NHS Active 10 & Couch to 5K Apps

As part of the NHS's Better Health Programme, the Active 10 walking tracker and the Couch to 5K mobile applications lead efforts to level up the health of the nation. Both offer easily accessible, trusted and free digital interventions which support mental health and champion the benefits of physical activity. Couch to 5K successfully helped people who had little or no previous experience complete a combined 6.46 million runs in 2022 alone.⁵³ By promoting the benefits of brisk walking, Active 10 has provided opportunities for adults across the country to improve their general health and wellbeing, without taking significant time out of their daily routine, or paying for expensive gyms or fitness programmes.

The government is also committed to helping enhance the capabilities of the sector to realise the opportunities and benefits that a greater focus on digital skills and innovation can deliver. These will act as the foundations upon which a more sustainable and inclusive sector can grow and thrive for the future. One existing example of this is the Innovation and Technology Panel for Concussion in Sport, where DCMS has convened a panel of tech sector experts with an interest in finding technological innovations and solutions designed to mitigate the effects and instances of concussion in sport.

The sector also captures a significant amount of data and information that can be shared and used to transform how people see and engage in sport. The government is committed to helping the sector further improve its access to rich, high-quality data in order to maximise these opportunities; aligning with the government's wider ambition to unlock data's potential to help improve society, as set out in the National Data Strategy.⁵⁴



53 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/millions-of-runs-completed-using-couch-to-5k-app>

54 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-national-data-strategy/national-data-strategy>

Harnessing open data to facilitate increased activity

A pertinent example of this is the work led by OpenActive, a sector-wide initiative that demonstrates the value of open data in highlighting opportunities for increased activity. Badminton England have adopted OpenActive standards to fully integrate open data into their digital strategy for increasing badminton participation across the country. Badminton England have since launched their Discover Badminton tool, which captures real-time data about availability of sessions at hundreds of locations across the country. This new platform has harnessed open data to provide a better booking experience for people looking to get active and play badminton.

In addition to the immediate impact which the opening up of data can have upon participation levels, the adoption of open data standards can also help organisations to improve their analysis and decision-making. By helping organisations target their engagement more effectively, this will not only secure higher participation levels in the long-term, but also enable a more sustainable and resilient sport sector.

The government has made excellent progress in delivering improved digital infrastructure to support the sector nationally; without this, we could not access the digital services we use every day, or to digitally engage with the sport and physical activity sector. A key part of this includes the ambitious programme of work which the Department for Science, Innovation, and Technology are leading to accelerate the commercial delivery of nationwide gigabit broadband and 5G in collaboration with the telecommunication providers. By ensuring a cross-government focus, DCMS will work to maximise opportunities which this programme creates for the sport and physical activity sector, including through the deployment and provision of platforms upon which sports digital services and products can be delivered.



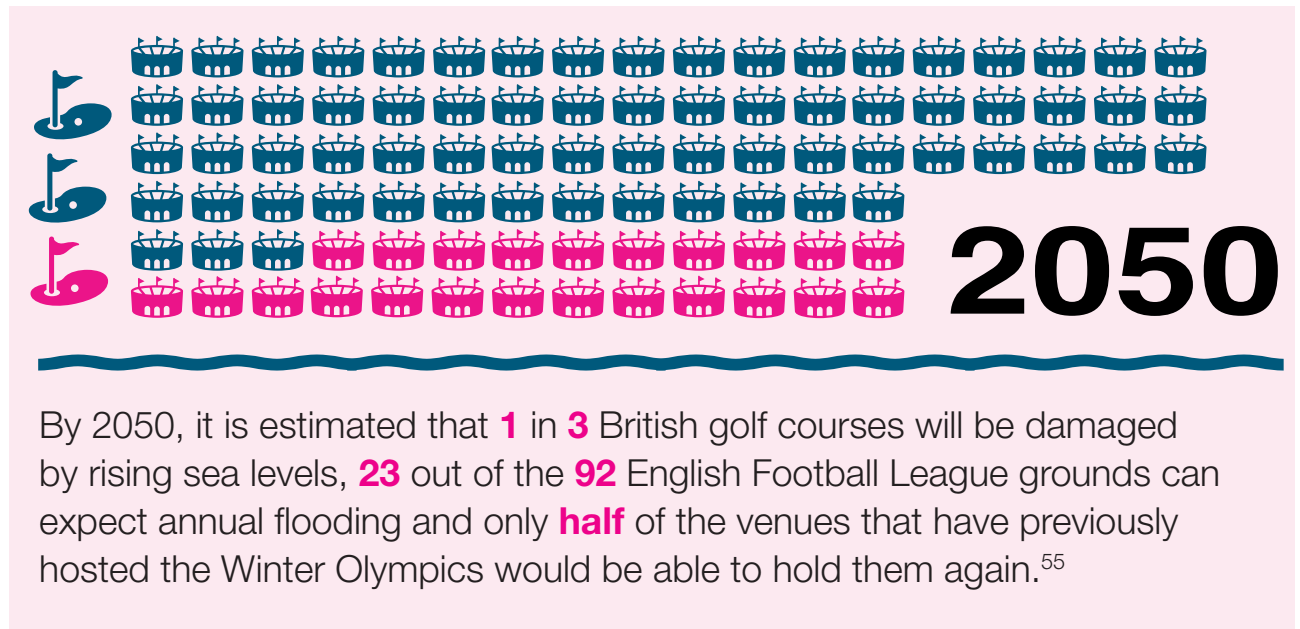
Digital innovation also has the potential to increase participation by acting as a driver for new investment to the sector. The government's aforementioned £21.9 million investment into improving the accessibility of tennis courts is a leading example of this; underlining the potential for digital solutions to help overcome existing barriers which prevent people from getting active, and in doing so, providing a blueprint for future investment to help increase participation levels across the sector. Digital innovation also opens up the sport sector to investment opportunities which improve fan and audience experience, with online platforms offering innovative ways to get active through the monetisation of data insights. In order to maximise these opportunities, **The government will support organisations to make use of existing technology and data to drive investment into the sector.**

The government is committed to working with the sector to ensure the adoption of technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) contribute towards achieving these goals in a responsible, ethical, and sustainable manner. We will maintain a cross-government approach in order to ensure there is support which helps organisations to prioritise and invest in appropriate data-driven, innovative technologies – as well as opportunities to digitally upskill – to enable a more sustainable and resilient sport sector.



3.3 Environmental sustainability

In parallel to economic sustainability, the future of sport participation in the UK and beyond faces a significant challenge from the combined impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss. The effects of extreme temperatures, flooding and rising sea levels are already threatening sporting infrastructure, player welfare and fan discomfort. These impacts are further exacerbated by rapidly declining rates of biodiversity, which together with climate change, pose a real threat to future participation.



Even under a 1.5 degree scenario, in line with both the Paris Agreement and the Glasgow Climate Pact at COP26, these climate impacts are expected to be exacerbated in the coming decades. The depletion of nature and biodiversity will only accelerate and intensify these impacts further – exponentially increasing the threat which both crises pose to current and future participation. With a reduction in available facilities and suitable environments for participating in activity, it is ever more important that the government and sector prioritises environmental sustainability within sport.



Environmental challenges also compound existing socio-economic disparities – both in terms of sport participation, and more widely throughout society. As reported by the Environment Agency, communities which rank highest in terms of deprivation across the UK are not only the most vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and pollution, but also face the greatest barriers to accessing green and blue spaces.⁵⁶ While activity levels among the most affluent groups have fully recovered to pre-pandemic levels, the least affluent communities are yet to do so, and remain the least likely to participate in sport and physical activity.⁵⁷ As such, there are strong parallels between the groups who will be most susceptible to the adverse effects of climate change and those who face the greatest barriers to participation in sport and physical activity. Given the scale of this challenge, it is only right that the government is involved in tackling these issues, both by championing environmental goals and bringing together expertise.

Government recognises that reducing the negative environmental impacts of sport may not be easy. However, where there is an ageing stock of sporting facilities, the drive to ensure modernised, energy-efficient facilities is twofold: for both future participation and long-term environmental sustainability, with low-carbon, low-emission facility provision.

The £63 million support package recently announced by the government to help keep public swimming pools afloat underlines this ambition to help address sustainability issues proactively, with a significant proportion of the funding dedicated towards helping local authorities invest in improving the long-term energy efficiency of their facilities.⁵⁸ As such, despite the challenges which our changing climate poses to participation in sport and physical activity, the government is fully committed to supporting the sector in driving work on sporting infrastructure sustainability forward to create a more environmentally sustainable and resilient sport sector.

Government also recognises the need to ensure pre-existing sporting infrastructure programmes remain resilient in the face of challenges posed by environmental issues. Noting that our understanding of issues such as microplastics will continue to advance, the government is aware of the need to ensure that the existing, established programmes which it supports, such as the £300 million investment into multi-sport grassroots facilities, remain adaptive to these changes in best practice on environmental sustainability.⁵⁹

Championing environmental goals

The UK is legally committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050, and sport has a key role to play in this. This strategy supports the delivery of the government’s Net Zero Strategy – in addition to the Environmental Improvement Plan, published in 2023, which provides a comprehensive delivery plan for driving progress towards the ten goals set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan, which aim to halt, and then reverse, the decline in nature.^{60 61} As part of driving progress towards the goals, it commits to enabling people to have greater access to nature, green and blue spaces, reducing pollution, and improving our use of resources. This strategy also operates in the context of the United Nations’ (UN) 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the UN’s Sport for Climate Action Framework, which are key tools in helping sports consider their environmental impact.

56 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-environment>

57 <https://www.sportengland.org/news/adults-activity-levels-england-bounce-back-pre-pandemic-levels>

58 <https://www.sportengland.org/news/new-funding-help-keep-leisure-centres-pools-afloat>

59 https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/news/reach-committee-votes-restrict-intentional-microplastics-2023-04-27_en

60 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-zero-strategy>

61 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan>

The UK requires the sport sector to play its role in positively responding to climate change, halting the decline in biodiversity and inspiring action. DCMS is calling on the whole of the sport sector to address this issue and tackle its own environmental impact, be that through waste prevention, carbon reduction, or protecting nature. Looking ahead, it is clear that strong action from sports is needed to adapt and deliver sustainability commitments, including the development of sport-specific sustainability initiatives. **DCMS will champion the importance of environmental sustainability within sport, including at major events, and encourage all levels of the sector to prioritise the development of their own sustainability initiatives.**

UK Greenest Cricket Ground Award

Recognising the impact which climate change and biodiversity loss are already having upon the sport, the Cricketer magazine's Greenest Ground award aims to encourage clubs across the UK to take proactive steps to enable nature and wildlife to flourish on their grounds. The award's inaugural winners, Whalley Range Cricket Club in South Manchester, showcase the value of rewilding their estate by planting trees, wild flowers, and installing bird and bat boxes across their grounds.⁶² Not only do such initiatives protect species by creating a more diverse, vibrant habitat for nature to flourish in, they also help to mitigate climate change by increasing carbon sequestration from the atmosphere. While only a starting point, examples such as these provide a blueprint for local clubs and organisations across the sector to take proactive steps which tackle both climate change and biodiversity loss.



62 https://www.thecricketer.com/Topics/club-cricket-guide/boundary_view_whalley_range_are_green_pioneers.html

We can also use sport's powerful cultural currency to inspire change. Beyond its immediate footprint, sport has a unique cultural and public influence which can bring people together behind common causes. This power can help shape and encourage positive environmental sustainability behaviour, raise awareness around the environmental impact of sporting activity, and facilitate access to green and blue spaces for a wide range of people.

Given the important role which the natural environment plays in hosting sporting activities across the country on a daily basis, the sector is also uniquely positioned to help maximise the cumulative potential for these spaces to have a positive impact across a number of sustainability metrics – whether it be increasing carbon sequestration, enhancing biodiversity, or helping communities adapt to the impacts of climate change. This is particularly pertinent in urban areas, for example, where parks and playing fields play a crucial role in mitigating the impacts of heatwaves by helping to regulate the temperature of surrounding areas.

Green Football Weekend

In February 2023, fans were encouraged to take climate-friendly actions, and clubs to hold 'greener games' as part of Green Football Weekend. Backed by The Football Association, English Football League and Women's Super League, over 80 of the UK's professional clubs were involved.⁶³ Supporters were encouraged to score green goals to help their club win the Green Football Club by taking actions such as having meat-free days, turning the thermostat down one degree, or taking a shorter shower. Teams also showed their support by wearing green armbands on pitch.

Initiatives such as this are an important first step in educating sports fans on how they can help play their part in reducing sports' environmental impact. However, there is a lot more work that needs to be taken by the whole sport sector to put the talk on reducing environmental impact into action. By using its unique global reach and cultural platform to influence, instigate, and inspire, football has the opportunity to lead from the front in the sector's goal to reach net zero.



Major sporting events can play a role in championing sustainability outcomes. These events can enable change through new initiatives and partnerships, sharing experience and knowledge, and encouraging visitors and participants to consider the impact of their behaviour. The government will work with UK Sport to embed environmental sustainability objectives and targets into the processes for bidding, planning and delivering major sporting events, ensuring that their environmental impact can be clearly understood, communicated, monitored and evaluated.

Case Study: Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games showed that sport can both inspire global audiences through elite performance and deliver on bold sustainability ambitions. These were the first Commonwealth Games to set the specific objective of hosting the most environmentally friendly Games yet, with a carbon-neutral design that took a comprehensive approach to the games environmental impact before, during, and after the event.⁶⁴

The Games focused on a carbon reduction approach by prioritising using existing venues, actively promoting the usage of public transport to venues, reducing the overall consumption of event materials and working with local suppliers to reduce “food miles” for catering.⁶⁵

As a carbon-offsetting measure for the Birmingham 2022 Games, Severn Trent committed to planting a 2022 acre legacy forest across the West Midlands by the end of 2024. The forecast is that the trees planted will sequester 201,800 tonnes CO₂e footprint over an approximate 35-year timeframe.⁶⁶

The Games also incorporated circular economy principles into its procurement, dissolution and waste strategy – ensuring assets used during the Games such as sporting equipment and kit were repurposed, reused and recycled where possible.

In their recently published Environmental Sustainability Strategy, UK Sport set out their vision to ensure high performance sport has a net positive impact on the environment by 2040.⁶⁷ As part of their aim to deliver for the ‘Team of Tomorrow’, UK Sport also outline their ambition to use their own platform to advocate for a thriving sporting system which takes action on environmental sustainability, as well as supporting partners on their own individual journeys; both of which align with government ambitions, as set out in this strategy.

64 <https://www.birmingham2022.com/about-us/our-purpose/our-legacy/sustainability/carbon-neutral-legacy>

65 <https://www.birmingham2022.com/sustainability>

66 <https://www.birmingham2022.com/news/2898987/putting-sustainability-at-the-heart-of-birmingham-2022>

67 <https://www.uk sport.gov.uk/our-work/powering-positive-change-and-social-impact/environmental-sustainability>



It is also important that organisations across the sector strive to demonstrate best practice on environmental sustainability within every matchday, fixture, or event they host – however big or small they may be. As part of this, DCMS encourages the sector to innovate where there are opportunities to reduce the environmental impact of its everyday and game day structures, operations and supply chains. One example of this could be taking steps to review league formats or fixture schedules, in order to mitigate the environmental impacts of player and spectator travel. The sport sector has the opportunity to build upon the momentum and example created by major sporting events, by embedding sustainability as a norm within its day-to-day operations, which the government strongly encourages.

Bringing together expertise

The government is taking collective action to tackle the environmental sustainability challenge. As outlined in Chapter 1, the government is committed to supporting active travel and increasing opportunities for walking and cycling, as outlined in the Department for Transport's *Decarbonising Transport* plan.⁶⁸ This has twin benefits of moving away from high carbon-emitting forms of transport, as well as helping get people active. In particular, where specific provisions are being made to increase active travel to school, this will not only help reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality, but also support the ambition of increasing children's activity levels.

Work is also underway to increase the sustainable provision of sport in schools, with the Department for Education committed to decarbonising the education estate and improving the energy efficiency of facilities.⁶⁹ This – in addition to the Environmental Improvement Plan, in which the government commits to ensuring everyone, regardless of their background, lives within a 15 minute walk of a green or blue space – speaks to the important role which sport and physical activity can play in delivering on a number of key priorities around health, inequality, and sustainability. We will continue to build on these interventions and share best practice with the sport sector to help achieve the twin objectives of increasing both opportunities for participation and environmental sustainability.

68 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-decarbonisation-plan>

69 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainability-and-climate-change-strategy/sustainability-and-climate-change-a-strategy-for-the-education-and-childrens-services-systems#action-area-3-education-estate-and-digital-infrastructure>

Following a successful Presidency of the Conference of the Parties (COP) in 2021, the UK is well placed to convene expertise on environmental sustainability, across both the public and private sectors. In order to fulfil its commitment to helping share best practice, **DCMS will convene a forum of government departments, experts, and organisations across the sport and physical activity sector to share expertise, guidance, and support, which will help the sector to implement and deliver on its ambition to become more environmentally sustainable.**



Case Study: Implementing Sustainability – A Code for Sports Governance

Organisations in receipt of public funding are now required to ensure they not only comply with all applicable laws and regulations, but that they also consider the impact on the environment of the decisions they make.⁷⁰ A Code for Sports Governance offers advice on this in the Code Commentary, and the Sports Governance Academy (funded by Sport England, alongside support from the other home nations sports councils and UK Sport) is providing additional support to help organisations explore this area of governance, and how their Boards may consider Environmental Social Governance or Corporate Social Responsibility programmes.⁷¹

70 <https://www.sportengland.org/funds-and-campaigns/code-sports-governance>

71 https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/sustainability?section=environmental_sustainability_and_sports_facilities

The government will also work with existing sector leads in this field, including UK Sport, Sport England, Sport Environment and Climate Coalition and The British Association for Sustainable Sport, to help ensure the sector is able to mitigate, adapt and proactively respond to the twin challenges of climate change and environmental degradation. By working with partners, including those in local authorities, the government will support the development of locally-driven action that caters to the specific needs of communities across the country.

There is already significant work underway in this field, and DCMS is committed to supporting this and building a better understanding of the position across the sport sector, with consistent measurement and reporting. Through Sport England and UK Sport we will consult across the sector to gauge existing levels of awareness, understanding and action on environmental sustainability. This will identify the support needed to help the sector adapt in the long-term, supporting NGBs and clubs with their sustainability ambitions and initiatives. In parallel with ongoing efforts to increase the sector's capability to implement these ambitions, **the government will collaborate with both UK Sport and Sport England to work towards embedding environmental sustainability as a pillar of funding agreements.**

What this will mean

- For government, this plan will mean that we will support those who need advice on financial sustainability, and share expertise on lessons we've learnt from football regulation. It will mean prioritising environmental sustainability, and a cross-department approach on how to achieve that.
- For the sector, this will mean support is on hand to those sports looking at their own financial sustainability, with the government also encouraging new investors into the sector. It will mean a renewed focus on environmental sustainability, with a push for sports in this country to lead the way.
- For the country, this will mean that sports are protected for the future so that organisations which play such an important role for people's physical and mental health are still around for generations to come.

Summary

Actions:

Economic sustainability:

- We will support organisations to develop long-term financial sustainability by signposting to resources for building stronger governance models and sharing best practice across the sector.
- We will work with the Department for Business and Trade to highlight best practice and opportunities for inward investment into the domestic sport sector, including in women's sport.
- With cross-government input and with the support of UK Sport and Sport England, we will deliver a new economic snapshot that articulates the economic value and growth opportunities that exist within sport in the UK.
- We will continue to bid and successfully host major sporting events that deliver significant socio-economic benefit across the UK – to maintain our world-leading track record in this area – and commission additional analysis of the economic value of these events to support future decision-making.

Technology, data and innovation:

- We will work with both the technology and the sport sectors to help identify innovative, inclusive digital solutions which help increase participation and activity.
- The government will support organisations to make use of existing technology and data to drive investment to the sector.

Environmental sustainability:

- We will champion the importance of environmental sustainability within sport, including at major events, and encourage all levels of the sector to prioritise development of their own sustainability initiatives. This is in line with UK Sport's goal for high-performance sport to be having a net positive impact on the environment by 2040, and for NGBs to have reduced their emissions by 50% by 2030.
- We will convene a forum of government departments, experts, and organisations across the sports and physical activity sector to share expertise, guidance, and support, which will help the sector to implement and deliver on its ambition to become more environmentally sustainable.
- We will work with UK Sport, Sport England and wider stakeholders to:
 - Assess the current provision of sustainability initiatives across the sector, from elite to community sport.
 - Identify the support needed to help the sector adapt in the long-term.
 - Support NGBs with their sustainability ambitions.
 - Ensure resources, information, and best practice is freely available within the sector, to enable all organisations to know how best to start and continue their sustainability journey.
 - Work towards embedding environmental sustainability as a pillar of funding agreements.

Measuring success

Knowing that we are making progress

Fundamental to this strategy is a call to arms to improve how the sector tells its story and the introduction of targets to show that we are making progress. This means ensuring that everyone understands the benefits of being physically active, as well as how the programmes that we run, and the investments that we make, shape people's behaviours and bring about change.

Targets are essential in ensuring that government and the sector are held to account in ensuring that there is a well evidenced trail of how our investments are making a difference to people's ability to get active. Through the new National Physical Activity Taskforce we will continuously monitor our progress against our national ambition and our specific sub-targets to see if we are making a difference. By having targets, we can shine a spotlight on the impact of our interventions, and be accountable for ensuring that public money is delivering change.

Should things not be moving in the right direction, we will work with Sport England and the wider sector to ensure that we address the problems head-on, and pivot our approach to bring about the change that is required.

It all starts with improving activity levels and decreasing inactivity, as by reaching those traditionally left behind by the sport sector, we can help ensure a more inclusive and sustainable sector in the years ahead.

What will we be measuring?

We will use the Active Lives survey to monitor progress against the headline national ambitions, as well as the specific targets to tackle disparities in participation rates. For adult targets, the baseline measurement period will be Active Lives November 2021-2022, and the final data point will be the Active Lives November 2028 – 2029. For targets associated with children and young people (CYP), we will use the relevant CYP Active Lives survey, with the baseline period being academic year 2021/22.

A full list of the targets that we will be measuring can be found below –

Population wide:

- Over 2.5 million more active adults as defined through the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines on physical activity
- Over 1 million more children meeting the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines on physical activity

Targets to reduce disparities in participation rates

- 1.4 million more active adults from those in NS-SEC 6-8 (see "Terminology" in the "Building on strong foundations" section on pages 13-14).
- 0.7 million more active people who identify as having 1 or more disabilities.
- 1.5 million more active adults aged 55+.
- 1.25 million more active women.

- 0.19 million more active Asian adults, particularly people from Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups.
- 0.09 million more active black adults.

Local Delivery

In order to deliver this ambition, we recognise that this shift needs to be driven at the local level. We are committed to addressing the imbalances that exist across the nation and focusing on the places most in need of levelling up. To achieve this we will:

- Increase activity rates in all parts of the country.
- Decrease inactivity rates in all parts of the country.
- Ensure at least 75% of Sport England place investment is committed to areas with the lowest levels of physical activity and social outcomes.

The DCMS Annual Report will include an update on our progress against each of these targets.

Summary of actions

<i>Participation</i>	<i>Tackling disparities in activity</i>	Introduce a cross-government ambition for all children to meet the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines on physical activity.
		Create a new cross-government National Physical Activity Taskforce to ensure that physical activity is prioritised across government.
		Sport England to set an evidence-based measure of success in Uniting the Movement around tackling disparities in sport and activity.
		Support Sport England to introduce a new partner evaluation framework which tracks the impact of sector partners and provides six-monthly reports evidencing spend and impact.
		Undertake discrete monitoring and evaluation of government funded facilities programmes, including the multi-sport grassroots facilities investment programme.
		Work with the sector to build the evidence base on potential mechanisms that could be introduced to enable the further growth of the private sector
<i>Children and young people</i>		Introduce a cross-government ambition for all children to meet the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines on physical activity.
		Work with arm's length bodies and commercial partners to explore what marketing interventions, including a potential new campaign, could be deployed to encourage children and young people to get children active.
		Introduce a new kitemark that measures schools parity of provision.
		Launch a review of the sport offer in schools outside of curriculum PE.
		Continue to support active travel to and from school and Bikeability delivery in the school day.
<i>Active Spaces and Facilities</i>		Deliver the investment in multi-use grassroots facilities, with over £300 million to be invested UK-wide by 2025.
		Deliver £21.9 million investment in park tennis courts by 2024.
		Develop a national vision for facilities before the end of 2023.
		Sport England to work with priority places to deliver an enhanced place-based working process.

<i>Integrity</i>	<i>Elite</i>	Continue our support of Olympic and Paralympic sport through funding of UK Sport.
	<i>Diversity</i>	Support efforts to tackle discrimination across the sector and holding organisations to account for failings in this area.
		Use opportunities presented through our support of hosting major sporting events, encouraging the sector to focus on the diversity of talent pathways.
	<i>Governance</i>	Alongside UK Sport and Sport England we will continue to monitor the impact of the revised Governance Code on the sector, particularly in terms of the effectiveness of Diversity and Inclusion Action Plans in increasing accessibility and equality of opportunity across the sector and at all levels of sport.
	<i>Doping and corruption</i>	Ensure UK Anti-Doping continues to have the appropriate framework to carry out effective investigations, in line with evolving challenges.
		The UK will ratify the Macolin Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions.
<i>Complaint Handling and Dispute Resolution</i>	Launch a call for evidence to understand current experiences, and work with the sector to decide how the prevention and handling of integrity issues could be strengthened.	
<i>Sustainability</i>	<i>Economic Sustainability</i>	Support organisations to develop long-term financial sustainability by signposting to resources for building stronger governance models and sharing best practice across the sector.
		Work with the Department for Business and Trade to highlight best practice and opportunities for inward investment into the domestic sport sector, including in women's sport.
		Deliver a new economic snapshot that articulates the economic value and growth opportunities that exist within sport in the UK.
		Continue to bid and successfully host major sporting events that deliver significant socio-economic benefit across the UK – to maintain our world-leading track record in this area – and commission additional analysis of the economic value of these events.

<i>Sustainability</i>	<i>Technology, data and Innovation</i>	Work with both the technology and the sport sectors to help identify innovative, inclusive digital solutions which help increase participation and activity.
		Support organisations to make use of existing technology and data to drive investment to the sector.
	<i>Environmental Sustainability</i>	Champion the importance of environmental sustainability within sport, including at major events, and encourage all levels of the sector to prioritise development of their own sustainability initiatives.
		Convene a forum of government departments, experts, and organisations across the sports and physical activity sector to share expertise, guidance, and support, which will help the sector to implement and deliver on its ambition to become more environmentally sustainable.
		Work with UK Sport, Sport England and wider stakeholders to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assess the current provision of sustainability initiatives across the sector, from elite to community sport. ● Identify the support needed to help the sector adapt in the long-term. ● Support NGBs with their sustainability ambitions. ● Ensure resources, information, and best practice is freely available within the sector, to enable all organisations to know how best to start and continue their sustainability journey. ● Work towards embedding environmental sustainability as a pillar of funding agreements.

Note on images

The majority of images used in this document have been sourced from either the Department for Culture, Media and Sport or Sport England. Images which have been sourced from other organisations are credited below:

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p46 – Active Partnerships.

p78 – Lawn Tennis Association. Image of Lydney Tennis Club, Gloucestershire.

p87 – Lawn Tennis Association. Photograph of Marke Wood Recreation Ground, Walmer, Dover District Council.

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