

Mayor of London Draft Sport Strategy: Submission by the Sport and Recreation Alliance

The Sport and Recreation Alliance

The Sport and Recreation Alliance believes that the power of sport and recreation can change lives and bring communities and people together. Together with our members and in partnership with the wider sector, we make the most of opportunities and tackle the areas that provide a challenge. We provide advice, support and guidance to our members who represent the outdoor recreation sector, traditional governing bodies of games and sport, county sports partnerships, water pursuits, and movement and dance exercise. As the voice of the sector, we work with Government, policy makers and the media to make sure grassroots sport and recreation grows and thrives. Having an active nation is important as it delivers huge benefits to society and the millions of participants, volunteers, staff and spectators.

Do you agree with the overall vision and the three themes of this draft sport strategy? If not, why not? Is anything missing?

The Sport and Recreation Alliance (the Alliance) supports the themes within the draft Sport Strategy, of 'bringing people together through sport', 'healthy and active through sport' and 'sport workers and volunteers'. However, we would comment that the use of the term 'sport' may be too exclusive, and there may be value in the strategy making reference to sport, physical activity and recreation in a broader context. This approach would, in turn, encourage engagement from some organisations who may not identify as traditional sport, but nevertheless help Londoners to get more active.

Does Chapter 2 identify the main issues that might impact on the role of sport to support social integration? If not, what is missing? *

The Alliance agrees that groups of women and disabled people are on average less likely to be physically active than other Londoners, but we were surprised to read that there is no difference in active sport participation within white and BAME groups across London. The Alliance has found that, on average, 40% of BAME people have a negative experience when pursuing sport, with Sporting Equals' summary of statistics (www.sportingequals.org.uk/about-us/key-stats-and-facts.html) detailing significant disparities in sporting participation between white and BAME groups.

Though the strategy identifies women and disabled people as focus demographics for improving social integration, we would encourage the strategy to also address social integration for BAME groups.

How can the Mayor help to increase sports participation to improve the physical and mental health of all Londoners, but in particular, for those Londoners who are inactive, or who have poor access to sports activities/facilities? *

The Alliance would encourage greater reference to, and collaboration with, parallel Mayor of London strategies, such as the *Health Inequalities Strategy*. Cross-departmental working must be prioritised, to

encourage a greater sense of interdepartmental accountability to ensure that the strategy's aims are fulfilled. Thus, we encourage explicit reference to this commitment within the final strategy.

Where there are existing programmes still within the city such as London Playing Fields Foundation's *Coping Through Football* (www.copingthroughfootball.org) already delivering effective outcomes (for instance 8 in 10 users previously dependent on drugs or alcohol, reported a reduction in their consumption as a result of the scheme), we encourage the Mayor of London to consider opportunities to invest in the sustainability of these programmes alongside funding to support new projects.

The Alliance believes that it is imperative for the physical and mental health of Londoners to have ease of access to green, open spaces, parks and other outdoor spaces such as open water vicinities. This is particularly important as several urban parts of London have high density populations with disproportionately limited available outdoor space available. The Alliance's own [research](#) shows that less green space in a living environment is associated with a greater risk of anxiety, depression and feelings of loneliness. As such, the Alliance encourages the Mayor to work in cooperation with the local London boroughs to ensure that these outdoor spaces of recreation are protected and developed.

Does chapter 4 identify the main issues for creating a thriving sport sector in London? If not, what is missing?

We are broadly supportive of the approach set out but would encourage the strategy to reflect the economic potential of sport in terms of driving employment, productivity and growth in London and in particular to ensure that the economic impact of sport is embedded in the work of the London Enterprise Action Partnership (LEAP) and the wider London Economic Development Strategy.

What sort of major sports events do you think should be held in London in future, and why? *

The Alliance supports events such as the London Marathon, and the impact they have had across the capital, on Londoners' engagement with, and change in mindset towards, being physically active.

While we support the proposed approach to hosting future events, we would encourage the Mayor of London to go further, deploying a broader calendar of major events to inspire participation within demographics which may be less physically active but which nonetheless reflect the diversity of London's population and which can support efforts to bring people from different backgrounds together. In this context we would encourage the Mayor of London to consider the potential for additional wider major events, such as the Gay Games hosted by Paris earlier this year and the Special Olympics due to be held in Abu Dhabi in 2019.

Is there anything that you would like to add about our proposed involvement in sport as set out in this document? Please also include where you think there are issues that ought to be included by are missing. *

We would draw your attention to the symbiotic relationship between the three key themes of social integration, being healthy and active, and developing the sporting workforce and capacity. The Alliance's *Hidden Diamonds* report (www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/pages/volunteering-research) evidences how sport volunteers perform a key role in supporting increased integration and tackling isolation within communities – key aspects of good health, as described by the World Health Organisation. We hope that the Mayor of London will recognise the role that sport volunteers play in uniting people across London, and embed this very clearly within the strategy.