

Sport Duty of Care Review: Call for evidence

Written submission by the Sport and Recreation Alliance May 2016

Key points

- Government should provide a positive package of support that advocates a healthy and active lifestyle. This should include building on the positive work that already exists on concussion and also incorporate specific safety issues such as the availability of defibrillators and cardiac screening
- Safeguarding children and adults at risk should be a central pillar in the new UK governance code and embedded within leadership structures of organisation in receipt of funding
- Effective talent pathways should be inclusive and developed through national governing bodies but also education settings
- Government should invest further in both the preventative and intervention aspects of mental health to maximise the potential of sport and recreation to benefit individual's and society's wellbeing. It should build on the wealth of progress that is being made already, including under Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation
- Effective athlete representation in governance is crucial and we will report separately to the Duty of Care Review team on this
- Young people should not have to choose between education and pursuing a career as an athlete. The Government's approach to apprenticeships should not force them to make this choice

Sport and Recreation Alliance

1. The Sport and Recreation Alliance is the umbrella body for governing and representative bodies of sport and recreation in the UK. We represent 320 members covering a wide range of activities from football, rugby and cricket to rambling, mind games and dance.
2. We are responding to this inquiry as our members, the sport and recreation sector, have a duty of care to participants from grassroots to elite level. This response provides an over view of key issues and we welcome the opportunity to input further through the working groups and ongoing communications.

Concussion and catastrophic injuries

3. The Alliance chairs the [Forum on Concussion in Sport and Physical Education](#) which brings together key stakeholders from across Government, national governing bodies and interested parties such as the Association for Physical Education and the Youth Sport Trust.
4. The Forum recognised a need to support education professionals to appropriately identify and respond to concussion so it produced [Concussion guidelines for the education sector](#). Forum members have worked hard to disseminate the guidelines through their networks. Government has helped this by getting the guidelines on the NHS Choices website and sports coach uk portal.
5. We welcome Government departments and Sport England's involvement with the Concussion Forum. However, more can be done. Every school in England should receive a hard copy of the concussion guidelines. This could be achieved by a small investment of around £15,000. We know from previous experience this is an effective

way to engage teachers and pupils so although this may be an exception to the Government's approach of not mandating what schools do, we believe this is a valuable investment that is about ensuring children can participate safely in sport.

6. More broadly, there needs to be proportionate risk management in and around sport and recreation. Risks must be managed, but importantly not overstated, and balanced against the risks of inactivity. One way to do this is to work together to educate people, in particular parents, about the benefits of being active and how to play safely.
7. The Duty of Care review is an opportunity to recommend a positive package of support that advocates a healthy and active lifestyle. This could incorporate specific safety issues, including the availability of defibrillators and cardiac screening. For example, building on the model of the Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation, Government could support the Alliance to work with CRY and the sector to launch a campaign around defibrillator use and cardiac screening.
8. A key area for further consideration is grassroots and ensuring that good practice is not limited to elite performance. We welcome continued Government support for national governing bodies of sport to provide training and guidance to those delivering grassroots sport including volunteers.
9. There is also a need to support health professionals to appropriately identify and respond to concussion and catastrophic injuries across all levels of sport from grassroots to elite. Awareness of, and engagement with, sport and exercise medicine specialists on the General Medical Council specialist register should be encouraged.

Safeguarding of young people and adults in sport

10. The Alliance sits on the Sports Safeguarding Partnership and supports the Safeguarding Adults in Sport Steering Group. We welcome the inclusion of safeguarding in the Duty of Care review as it is critical to ensuring children and adults are able to safely enjoy participating in a wide range of sport and recreation activities. Many sport and recreation organisations have made positive progress in this area which should be learnt from and built on.
11. The Alliance supports the submission of the Sports Safeguarding Partnership which highlights that safeguarding children and adults should be a central pillar in the new UK governance code. Its status as an integrity issue should be the same as the other integrity issues which the code seeks to address. There should be clear links between the code and the work of the 'Duty of Care' working group.
12. Safeguarding must be embedded within leadership structures and prioritised by organisations. Accountability for safeguarding needs to be clearly placed at the top of organisations through CEOs, senior management and boards. Safeguarding should sit on organisational risk registers and, where issues are identified, swift action taken to ensure that the risks are managed and mitigated.
13. Consideration needs to be given to how safeguarding requirements can be applied to organisations which may fall outside of the current proposals and which may leave children and adults at risk. For example sports and leisure bodies which may not receive public funding, such as private sport or leisure organisations and unregulated sports providers in both the private and voluntary sectors, provide services to millions of children and adults. They should be subject to the new definition of 'Duty of Care' and should be expected to meet safeguarding requirements. It is essential that the approach is consistent across all providers and that users of services and facilities can do so with confidence.

14. Central government must play a key role in acting as a point of information, signposting to expert resources and training within the sector. Further, government has a role in setting standards and in disseminating good practice. At a local level, local authorities should play a co-ordinating role, ensuring regular dialogue between sport and recreation organisations, County Sports Partnerships, facilities, social care and health services, law enforcement and other relevant organisations.
15. Government should closely engage with the Sport Safeguarding Partnership and the Adult Safeguarding Group to ensure effective measures are put in place so that everyone can enjoy taking part in sport and recreation in a safe environment.

Talent pathways

16. NGBs and their club structures have well-established talent development pathways to identify and nurture talented athletes and we believe these should continue to form a core component of talent identification and development.
17. Nonetheless, outside of the existing NGB/club pathways, we believe there are ways in which talent identification and development could be improved. Schools, college and university competitions – including the School Games and BUCS competitions – provide an important showcase for young athletes who may not have come through the formal NGB talent pathways or who may have developed later. While we recognise that NGBs, schools, colleges and higher education providers need to work more closely together to identify and nurture talent, we believe Government must also support the continued development and growth of both the School Games and BUCS competitions.
18. Any focus on talent pathways should not focus exclusively on Olympic and Paralympic sports. Other sports in which Britain can achieve international success should be considered as they can produce similar benefits and talent pathway arrangements.
19. We welcome the focus in Sport England's new strategy on inclusion within talent pathways. It is important that Government works with the sport and recreation sector to enable anyone with talent to benefit from support pathways.

Mental health

20. The Alliance is pleased to see mental health is a key part of the Duty of Care review and welcomes the recognition of the opportunity to build on the positive work and momentum that is going on under the banner of the Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation.
21. We want physical activity to be a central pillar of Government's commitment to put mental and physical health on equal footing. Within this, we want Government and arms-length bodies to:
 - Invest in the preventative role of physical activity in relation to mental health as well as interventions to help people dealing with mental health problems
 - Agree a sector standard evidence 'tool kit' based on the Warwick Edinburgh mental wellbeing scale for sport and recreation to consistently demonstrate impact against outcomes for mental health and secure funding for projects
 - Agree a sector standard for mental health training of coaches and other physical activity professionals
 - Promote the NICE guidelines (2014) for physical activity exercise referral schemes with health practitioners; from practice professionals to commissioners.

22. We would welcome clarification from Sport England on how it is going to make mental health a meaningful part of its work and how organisations are expected to measure and demonstrate impact against this outcome. We would also like to see resources on mental health embedded in Club Works / Club Marks material.
23. There is a role for Government departments, Sport England and Public Health England to share best practice of how physical activity and mental health projects, as well as promote learning and support for organisations to replicate what works. The Alliance would be happy to help facilitate this through its networks, such as with Mental Health Charter signatories.

Representation of athletes' interests within sport governance

24. We are running a survey with our members on athlete representation within sport governance. We will report separately to Baroness Tanni Grey Thompson on the findings of this.

The educational support (formal or otherwise) for sportspeople

25. The Alliance has been working closely with SkillsActive, Sport England and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to raise sector concerns about proposed changes to the Advanced Level Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence to the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. It is vital that young people are not forced to choose between education or sporting excellence and that the sport sector is able to contribute to Government's vision of 3 million apprenticeships by 2020.
26. We are pleased that these conversations have resulted in the decision to allow this year's intake of AASE apprenticeships to access education opportunities but would like clarification that both the funding rule exemption and employer exemption will remain in place for the duration of an athlete's time on AASE for all those that enrol before 31 March 2017.
27. There is also the longer-term issue of how the sports offer will meet the requirements for employer-led apprenticeships from 2017. We will continue to engage with this agenda on behalf of our members and hope that Government will work with the sector to ensure that our young talented athletes are able to excel in both sport and education.