

## Written evidence submitted by the Sport and Recreation Alliance (PHS0538)

### The Sport and Recreation Alliance

The Sport and Recreation Alliance is the independent representative body for grassroots community sport and recreation in the UK. We bring together over 300 members who work tirelessly to **keep our nation active and healthy through sport, recreation, and physical activity**.

Through the varied activities our members offer, they ensure **12 million of our children and adults stay active**: delivering the UK's local grassroots sport clubs, from rugby, football, cricket, netball; supporting the nation's outdoor activities and water sports from canoeing, sailing, mountaineering, angling; delivering dance and movement classes in our communities; and showcasing the best of ours and the world's elite sport moments and tournaments from the Commonwealth Games to World Cups.

### Maximising the role of sport, recreation and physical activity in prevention

We welcome the Committee's identification of **physical activity and healthy environments, homes and workplaces** as possible areas of focus for the inquiry.

Grassroots community sport, recreation and physical activity delivers £72bn annually in social value through improved health and wellbeing and community cohesion. This is largely due to the immense public health benefits which derive directly from participation in physical activity, as each year the sector prevents:

- 50,000 cases of heart disease and stroke worth £1bn
- 93,000 cases of dementia worth £3.5bn
- 375,000 cases of depression worth £110m
- 900,000 cases of diabetes worth £3.6bn
- 8,500 cases of cancer worth £460m
- 30,000,000 GP visits worth £450m

In addition, £42bn of mental wellbeing impact is generated through improved life satisfaction of people participating and volunteering in sport and physical activity.

Further, early evidence from the Green Social Prescribing pilot programmes also shows clear benefits of investing into programmes which take a systems approach with key local key partners delivering activity in green and blue spaces.

Despite this compelling evidence of the positive impact sport, recreation and physical activity can have on physical and mental health outcomes, its value is currently not being maximised in Government's approach to prevention, reducing health inequalities and alleviating NHS pressures.

We believe this must change: our sector has a significant contribution to make, and fundamental changes are needed to unlock its full potential. We have set out these changes in our recent report [Unlocking the Potential](#).

In this context we would urge the Committee to focus part of its inquiry on the vital role of sport, recreation and physical activity in prevention including:

- How national policymakers can embed sport, recreation and physical activity in major prevention strategies.
- How Government policy can be better joined up both nationally and locally to ensure sport, recreation and physical activity is built into everyday life – including in communities and workplaces.
- How Integrated Care Systems can be supported to maximise the role of grassroots sport, recreation, and physical activity to improve population health and reduce health inequalities.
- How key barriers to better utilisation of sport, recreation and physical activity can be overcome including but not limited to:
  - The emphasis on acute care at the expense of prevention with the result that the health system is now under immense pressure with many individuals waiting for treatment for conditions that were mostly preventable.
  - Siloed working between Government departments and agencies with responsibility for health, wellbeing and sport, recreation and physical activity.
  - A lack of clear strategic leadership on the role sport, recreation and physical activity can play in preventing ill-health and reducing health inequalities.
  - Challenges in navigating a complex and fragmented health and care system.
  - The need for more comprehensive evidence and data to improve decision making and better connect the sport, recreation and physical activity sector with health and care.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Committee on these issues and we would be happy to facilitate further engagement with our members if that would be helpful.

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