

## Written evidence submitted by Thomas Doar

My name is Tom Doar, 18, and I am a first year sports degree student at Loughborough and The IFA. Until The Football Association randomly dismantled all the England Futsal Teams several weeks ago, I was a proud member of the U19 squad starting training for The U19 Futsal Euros - being one of only two players having birth dates that would have allowed participation in the U19 squad since 2018.

I understand that The DCMS Select Committee is looking for evidence about sports governance being fit for purpose and delivering increased resilience of sports clubs and venues and I sincerely hope you will read my submission which addresses these points. The first thing that must be recognised is that if a sport has a really, really big governance problem, it's quite possible that the only voice that sport might have is through people like me writing to people like you. I have already done everything I can for my sport. I've passed coaching licenses, I've trained at every possible opportunity – often meaning that I had to get up at 6am for college, finish training too late for public transport requiring a 100 mile round trip lift home so that I could practice with my club. I would get to bed at 1am and then have to be up at 6am next day, week after week. To meet the demands of the sport it is not uncommon to take 12 hours and hundreds of miles travel for a 90-minute league game.

I know that many other futsal players share my passion and one way or another have just as much commitment and determination. Through our dedicated participation we are all investing in and trying to improve our sport. We are all adding to the sport's value so it can pass down to the next generations following after us. I have trained with coaches and teams in Sheffield, Derby, Chesterfield, Wigan, Manchester, Leeds, Nottingham, San Diego and Loughborough. I have had the privilege to work with coaches from Croatia, USA National Team, Brazil, Portugal, and Spain. They have all handed me something of their passion to both enjoy, to bring joy and to propagate futsal for the enjoyment and benefit of others. As I started my Sports Degree, I really was looking forwards to my own futsal passion and achievements being the springboard that would launch me into bringing the futsal experience to a wider audience through my studies and future work.

Even though The Football Association might have big budgets, based especially on its recent behaviour it evidently knows little about futsal or how to recognise and protect (especially non-monetary) value. The futsal community and my team mates hear endless rumours, but it is impossible to find out who actually decided that my tireless effort – and that of so many others that take unpaid leave, miss important commitments and let down family and friends risking their relationships for their sport – is apparently valueless. Eventually we will probably know who is responsible for the cuts. That will make no difference to the fact that blaming Covid for slashing futsal with no transparency or attempt to protect the value of previous investment in the sport is immoral and nonsensical. Even keeping skeleton national team activity going ready for any opportunities that might come along and allowing the teams and community to contribute even more to support futsal would be so much better than what The FA has done. The FA's paltry futsal budget is nothing at the side of the value given freely by most of those involved in the national teams and the whole pyramid of involvement it took to make them possible. A governing body that is so out of touch with a sport it is supposed to represent is clearly not capable of promoting or developing the sport either without a big change in attitude and priorities. Once again, the only chance Sport England and the DCMS has to hear the true potential of futsal is if it chooses to listen to what may appear as seemingly insignificant voices like mine who are actually in the middle of the sport and understand what it offers.

As things stand today, the huge community benefits that futsal has to offer (and is already delivering in isolated pockets) are being held hostage by the governing body as it is determined that futsal is the same as football and therefore adequately and fairly represented by the 'football voice'. This could not be further from reality.

I implore those considering sports provision and all that goes with it in England to reach out to people directly involved with futsal. There are some of these – at least there used to be – working in The FA, but somehow their voices are not being heard. There are clubs, international bodies like FIFA and UEFA, grass roots teams, national and international level players, college and university students, coaches, parents, referees, league organisers like BUCS and others all with strong passion and understanding of futsal. Of course, there is an obligation for the whole community to step up and deliver the best that futsal has to offer, but the absence of clear focus and vision from the top makes it difficult.

One big problem is that futsal and football both involve kicking a ball. That has resulted in both sports sharing a governing body when in fact they have so little in common beyond the fact that skills you are likely to gain playing futsal could make you a better footballer.

(Interestingly, I have never heard it suggested that playing football helps better futsal.) Where things really go wrong is that when you force a sport like futsal that is all about team work, skill, cooperation, passion, development and doing a lot with small budgets to share a governing body that's focused primarily on big money, crazy budgets, status and winning at all costs, there is little wonder that the needs and benefits of futsal don't get any consideration or representation. By ditching the national teams, The FA pretty much tore up the 'pay check' for all those striving to get to the top. Simply, The FA just doesn't seem to understand non-monetary value. Despite the prominence of 'Respect' in The FA's messaging, the only thing it appears to respect is its bank balance, with little or no respect for the sporting values that should be at its core.

Please, on behalf of all those who have helped me so much and all those yet to discover futsal, give futsal the chance it deserves. Reach out to the community. I'm sure many will have written their own submissions to this Call for Evidence each giving their perspective. Please give consideration to the fact that lack of governance means futsal has a fragmented voice and you will need to combine multiple submissions to gain an over-all picture of why futsal is worth developing and currently so under-developed.

If there is one thing I would share to convey in the shortest time what futsal is about, it's this goal I assisted playing for Loughborough against the England U23's. It gives just a glimpse of the speed, intensity, excitement, collaboration and vision packed into every moment of play. There is a reason that England international futsal games at St. George's Park's Futsal Arena were sold out.

I'm number 8 and my mate Lawson scored the goal after I megs'd my opponent. The part of The FA responsible for cutting funding and deleting the National Teams needs to learn about what makes teams work and understanding futsal is a great place to start.

[Loughborough vs U23 Goal](#)