

## **Rugby Football Union – Written evidence (NPS0146)**

**How can local delivery, including funding structures, of sport and recreation be improved to ensure that people of all ages and abilities are able to lead an active lifestyle? For example, how successfully do local authorities and other bodies such as Active Partnerships, Leisure Trusts, local sports clubs and charities work together, and how might coordination be improved?**

Covid-19 has had a devastating impact on the economy and sport has been no exception. As a sport that is predominantly self-funded and with the vast majority of community clubs owning their own assets, rugby has perhaps been affected more than many others. Funding is therefore limited to support clubs and programmes that deliver opportunities across the country. Two key areas that could assist are:

- Betting Fair Return – with the Government reviewing the Gambling Act, this could be an opportunity to consider a fair return for sport. Currently, betting companies use sports' product to make substantial profits but invest little money into the product they rely upon. In addition, sport is required to pick up the integrity costs related to betting with no financial support from the sector.
- Sugar Tax – extending the Sugar (soft drinks) Levy and a more collaborative approach between NGBs and Government on the use of the funds raised, would enable government to capitalise on programmes and structures that are pre-existing and increase the reach and impact of the policy.

It is clear that sport and recreation will be instrumental in the nation's recovery from this pandemic and we must ensure that policies are in place to facilitate its necessary growth. The Betting Fair Return and the Sugar Tax provide two policies that would support the provision of sport in the community without placing an additional burden on HM Treasury.

**How can children and young people be encouraged to participate in sport and recreation both at school and outside school, and lead an active lifestyle? If possible, share examples of success stories and good practice, and challenges faced.**

Sport needs to be integrated into every child's life, ensuring opportunity and encouragement are provided both within and outside the school day. Fundamental to this is putting physical education back on the curriculum and developing the links between schools and community sport.

Our CBRE All Schools programme is a real success story which shows the benefit of introducing team sport into schools through community club collaboration. Named All Schools to reflect the inclusive nature of Rugby Union – the programme was designed to introduce rugby to schools not traditionally involved and open accessibility to a more diverse group of children. Within five years, we reached our target of delivering the programme in 750 schools, a quarter of all state secondary schools in England.

Programme Outline:

- Year 1: Resources, kit and equipment provided by the RFU as well as hands on coaching support and teacher training.
- Year 2-3: Further development of staff training, ensuring after year three schools are in a position to continue as a sustainable rugby school long after the programme is complete.
- Year 4-6: Building on relationships developed in the first three years, Chapter Two provides three further years of support from clubs to enhance playing opportunities and club transition.

All Schools has created a positive legacy for one million children through rugby and its core values, making school life happier and healthier, reducing anti-social behaviour, enhancing learning and increasing self-esteem. 36% of those involved were female and 22% of were from BAME communities. 5,000 teachers were trained to deliver rugby and 18,000 young people who were introduced to rugby through All Schools went on to join their local club, reinvigorating junior rugby provision in many of the 330 clubs involved.

Underpinning these programmes however, must be school provision of physical literacy and enjoyment of sport and recreation. Time needs to be secured on the curriculum for sport as well as in extra-curricular activities and physical education should form an integral part of Ofsted inspections. The significant benefits of sport and activity on a child's physical health, mental wellbeing and educational attainment are clear and well evidenced and should be available to all children regardless of where they go to school.

**How can adults of all ages and backgrounds, particularly those from under-represented groups, including women and girls, ethnic minorities, disabled people, older people, and those from less affluent backgrounds, be encouraged to lead more active lifestyles? If possible, share examples of success stories and good practice, and challenges faced.**

Just like every other aspect of society, sport is at its best when it is diverse and accessible to all. To achieve this though, we need a proactive approach. A good example of both the success and challenges of such an initiative is the RFU's Inner Warrior Programme.

The Inner Warrior programme born in 2016 delivers three blocks of rugby taster sessions in grassroots clubs across the country and has been fundamental to community growth. Since its inception, there have been over 1,000 Warrior Camps with over 20,000 attendees. Sessions are free of charge, suitable for all fitness levels and provide an easy and simple introduction to the game.

With the success of the programme clear, in 2019 the RFU launched the first Inner Warrior Series, an entry level competition which asked teams born from Warrior Camps to develop local competition structures that best suited them. 78 teams got involved and 12 local series were staged.

There are now over 40,000 registered female players in over 400 clubs nationwide, up from 25,000 in 2017, with an additional 90,000 girls taking part in schools, colleges and universities as well as 10,000 females playing O2 Touch.

Growth in the women's and girls' games remains fundamental to our core strategy and as such we will continue to drive forward opportunity and participation. A challenge that accompanies this growth however, is our facilities. The vast majority of our clubs were built as a provision for men. As the women's

game grows, we must ensure that our facilities are suitable and welcoming to accommodate the requirements of a more diverse player base. A well thought through sport facilities investment strategy is required and if we are to achieve true representation across sport, Government involvement is crucial.

**Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation, the Government's 2015 sports strategy, outlines five outcome priorities: physical health, mental health, individual development, social and community development and economic development. Are these the right priorities and how successful has the government been in measuring and delivering these outcomes to date?**

Is government capturing an accurate picture of how people participate in sport and recreation activities in its data collection? How could this be improved?

We consider these five outcome priorities to be a good measure of sport participation. While there will always be small details that each sport would be eager to refine, the key to a successful strategy is consistency. Successful partnerships are underpinned by a good understanding of what we are working towards and how this will be measured, and as such the benefits of minor improvements would not outweigh the disadvantages of regularly changing priorities.

**How can racism, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny and ableism in sport be tackled?**

All those involved in sport must continue to challenge themselves, to keep improving and to make sure an equal experience and equal opportunities are offered to all.

Diversity and Inclusion is one of the RFU's eight strategic objectives, to drive rugby union in England to reflect the diversity of society. With an action plan agreed, and implementation and oversight groups in place, we will sponsor, support and measure change across the game. Following in-depth research, we have made a commitment to improving D&I across four key areas of the game:

- Fans, Followers & Partners – focusing on interest in rugby, the perception of our brand, content and how we may work collaboratively with our commercial partners
- Employees & Board – working to understand the makeup of our organisation in the first instance and the areas we can impact change
- Game Play – much work already ongoing in this area so will be assessing this against the research to identify any gaps and putting a renewed focus on current interventions
- Game Leadership – working to improve the representation of our community at the highest level of volunteering and the areas we can impact and change

A thorough D&I strategy, coupled with programmes such as Rugby Against Racism, Rainbow Laces and collaborations such as our partnership with Stonewall are creating an environment where these important conversations permeate all aspects of our organisation and sport. While we still have a lot more to do, it is clear that a comprehensive strategy across all aspects of sport is critical if we are to affect real change.

## **What can be done to improve and implement effective duty of care and safeguarding standards for sports and recreation activities at all levels?**

The RFU is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the sport. All children are entitled to feel safe and protected from any form of abuse and neglect and have the right to take part in sport in a safe, positive and enjoyable environment.

In order to provide children with the best possible experiences and opportunities, it is imperative that everyone operates within an accepted ethical framework and demonstrates exemplary behaviour. This not only ensures the game makes a positive contribution to the development of children, safeguards them and promotes their welfare but also protects all personnel from allegations of abuse or poor practice.

To promote and maintain good safeguarding practices, the RFU created and regularly delivers safeguarding courses. These courses are held throughout the country and are designed for all individuals within a rugby environment. From August 2020 it was made compulsory for anyone who requires DBS clearance to complete an on-line safeguarding awareness course. This course does not replace our three hour face-to-face safeguarding training, but ensures that everyone, without exception has a grasp of the basics in relation to safeguarding. It ensures that the RFU are meeting the obligations laid out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 in that those working or volunteering with children understand their personal safeguarding responsibility, know what to look out for and how to raise concerns.

Every club that runs Age Grade Rugby or that has 17 year olds playing up into the adult game must have a Club Safeguarding Officer and every Constituent body of the RFU must have a Safeguarding Manager.

The RFU fully endorse the recommendations made in Baroness Grey-Thompson's Duty of Care in Sport Review. It is particularly important that steps are taken to close the loophole associated with 'Positions of Trust' and bring expectations of those in sport in line with colleagues in education. Effective safeguarding standards across all sports could also be improved by the implementation of statutory guidance, similar to that provided to educational establishments in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020).

## **Should there be a national plan for sport and recreation? Why/why not?**

A national plan for sport and recreation has the ability to reflect its importance within society. Such a plan however can only be effective if delivered through an integrated cross-departmental approach. There is clear recognition within Government that such collaboration is key to long term progression but its importance cannot be overstated.

Getting more children active and participating in sport for example, is a priority for the Government's preventive health agenda. It too is a priority for the sports sector to ensure the next generation of players and ensure the benefits of sport are available to children across the county, as well as for educators who recognise the importance of physical education and the advantages of activity throughout the school day. Without DfE, DCMS and DHSC working together, this cannot be achieved effectively.

Such collaboration must also underpin a national plan. Cross-departmental work is fundamental to effective sport policy as its benefits reach far wider than sport itself into health, education, business and trade.

*24 February 2021*