

Written evidence submitted by the Centre for Sport and Human Rights, FARE Network, Mission 89, Women in Sport, World Players Association

Call for Evidence: DCMS Select Committee on the Impact of COVID-19 on DCMS Sectors

Executive Summary

This submission focuses on the immediate impact and likely long-term consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic to:

1. Athletes, including:
 - Issues on safe return to play – Including ensuring that athletes are not held legally or economically responsible for additional risks associated with COVID-19, and that player health and safety is not compromised for the sake of an accelerated return to play
 - Unknown long-term health impacts of coronavirus – Preliminary studies suggest that the virus could scar the lungs or cause inflammation of the heart which could have detrimental impacts for an athlete’s career
 - Support for under-funded sports – As return to play plans are put in place for some of the UK’s larger sports, it is important to remember that many smaller sports and their athletes will feel the impacts more acutely
2. Female athletes and women’s sport more broadly, including:
 - The apparent prioritisation of men’s sport – Significant resources have been put into the return of men’s leagues, while women’s leagues have been cancelled. This creates the impression that men’s sports must continue while women’s sports are an optional extra
 - Women’s sport in jeopardy – 2019 was a great year for women’s sport and generated significant momentum, but COVID-19 threatens that progress
 - Significant financial burden – Women’s sport is particularly fragile due to limited resources, and the economic insecurity heightens as leagues are cancelled and pay for female athletes becomes even more uncertain.
 - Additional barriers – Women face gender-specific barriers to grassroots participation in exercise and sport and have consistently reported being less active than men. COVID-19 has exacerbated these barriers and introduced new ones.
3. BAME athletes and communities, including:
 - Greater health risks – Extensive research and evidence suggests that people from BAME backgrounds are more likely to die from COVID-19.
 - Concerns for BAME athletes and workers – Given the greater health risk, many BAME athletes have spoken out about not feeling comfortable returning to play. Further, preliminary data suggests a correlation between

low-skilled professions and higher death rates from coronavirus with many BAME people making up the low-skilled workforce

- Lack of BAME leadership in sports governance – Though lack of diversity on Boards across the sport sector has been a systemic issue since before the pandemic, this lack of diversity has been brought into stark focus with how disproportionately BAME people are affected

4. Victims of trafficking in and through sport, often caused by:

- Lack of reporting – Football migration and trafficking appears now to be of low priority, whereby its victims are at the bottom of the pyramid in terms of welfare and protection.
- Lack of access to support services – Migrant workers, be they migrant athletes or those working on sport infrastructure, will already have limited access to resources, and with existing resources being concentrated around response to the pandemic, their access is even more limited.
- Uncertain contracts – Many migrant athletes play for smaller clubs to begin with, and for those who do have contracts, these clubs are likely to face significant economic pressure as they recover from the pandemic.

This submission concludes with a series of recommendations for how DCMS can ensure that sport does not return to normal, but returns better and fairer than it was before, including:

- ✓ Share the view that the goal should not be to rebuild what we had, but to build a better, fairer and more equitable sport sector across the UK
- ✓ Take immediate steps to ensure that no athletes are being forced to sign insurance liability waivers in any leagues operating in the UK
- ✓ Where health and safety measures required for safe return to play cannot be guaranteed, either support these sports with the necessary funding or testing kits to make this possible, or provide support to ensure their survival until social distancing measures are further relaxed
- ✓ When using public funds, criteria for the equal distribution of funds to men's and women's disciplines should be a condition of funding to sports governing bodies. Any public money spent on bailing out men's elite sport should have conditions that protect women's sport
- ✓ Moving forward, explore what government incentives may be required to ensure that the economic models between men's and women's sports do not continue to perpetuate inequality
- ✓ Support the urgent implementation of recommendations from Public Health England's study on the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on BAME ethnicities and ensure these recommendations get implemented in the sport sector
- ✓ Ensure that new and existing return to play plans factor in specific vulnerabilities, including to support workers, and involve these communities in consultation
- ✓ Set minimum standards for diversity on Boards of national sports bodies, especially those that receive government funding
- ✓ Introduce formal measures providing basic needs services to support the most vulnerable, particularly migrant workers and victims of trafficking

Introduction

The impacts of the COVID-19 crisis have been vast and evident. No sector has been untouched by the crisis, but certain sectors, including tourism, hospitality and sport have felt the effects more acutely than others. Before the pandemic, the sport industry was [estimated to be worth](#) just shy of USD 500 billion annually, and while experts say it is still too early to grasp the full impact, early [projections](#) suggest that revenue of global sports for 2020 is only likely to reach 54% of what was estimated pre-pandemic. Impacts have not only been financial – they have included the cancellation and postponement of major sporting events, and the loss of jobs and opportunities among athletes, many of whom were in their final stages of preparation for what should have been the peak of their careers – the 2020 Summer Olympics, now postponed until 2021. However the potential for sport has also never been greater – at a time when almost all aspects of social life have been locked down, people across the UK have been permitted one hour a day for outdoor exercise which preliminary research suggests is encouraging many who were previously inactive to become more physically active.

This submission has been prepared by the Centre for Sport and Human Rights, on behalf of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Sport, Modern Slavery and Human Rights, co-chaired by Baroness Young of Hornsey and Alex Norris MP. The submission features contributions from the World Players Association, Women in Sport, FARE Network and Mission 89, and has been further informed by the opinions of over 100 people from within the UK sports industry who attended a consultation webinar organised by the UN Global Compact UK Network on 16 June 2020. This group decided to write a submission as a result of growing concern that not enough attention is being placed on the impacts from COVID-19 to those outside the realm of elite, male sport. The focus of this submission is on people, and this submission has been written with three objectives:

1. To ensure that government spending during the recovery goes to those who have experienced the most severe impacts from the crisis
2. To ensure that issues beyond just the financial impact are taken into consideration
3. To ensure that public funding on sport is better aligned with sporting values such as non-discrimination and fair play

1. What has been the immediate impact of COVID-19 on athletes and what are the likely long-term consequences?

Athletes are at the forefront of sport and are the ones most likely to be exposed to the virus in return to play scenarios. It is therefore essential that their health and well-being is a priority, that they are not forced into returning to play before it is safe to do so, and that a particular duty of care is given to those athletes from less well-funded sports that need to get back to action to support their livelihood.

Safe return to play

The global athletes union World Players Association, which represents more than 85,000 athletes globally, has published a set of [Guiding Principles](#) developed in collaboration with players unions, medical experts, health and safety, and liability lawyers to ensure a safe return to play for athletes. One of the six principles states that players should not bear the

legal, economic or health based risks needed to support return to play efforts. It is unreasonable to expect players to bear liability for additional risks themselves, which means giving them the opportunity to opt-out from situations forcing them to put themselves at risk, such as signing insurance waivers. Yet this is an issue that has already emerged in rugby union where Premiership players are [facing the possibility](#) of having to sign disclaimers before returning to training among fears that clubs and doctors may not have sufficient insurance policies to cover claims against the coronavirus.

Health and well-being

Three of the six principles in World Player's guidelines focus on general health and wellbeing issues including: player protection from COVID-19 health risks, essential medical protections and treatments, and access to support for mental health and wellbeing. In football, the Premier League clubs are [testing their players twice a week](#), and any player who displays symptoms must self-isolate immediately, including on a match day. There is already [evidence](#) to suggest that the coronavirus causes inflammation of the heart, which may endanger elite athletes. Most doctors are recommending at least 10 to 14 days with no physical exercise following diagnosis of the coronavirus, including for those who test positive without symptoms, and longer for those whose symptoms are more severe. Upon return to play, extensive testing would then be needed on an athlete, including an ECG and an echo ultrasound, to identify whether there is any inflammation in the heart or lungs – myocarditis, blood clotting and lung damage would be the biggest concerns. If athletes pushed themselves too far or too early, they could risk permanent damage, and in extreme cases, cardiac arrest.

The risk of injury is also substantially increased – UEFA recently published their 15-year study of pre-season training programmes at 44 elite clubs called the [Elite Club Injury Study \(ECIS\)](#) which was published in the American Journal of Sports Medicine earlier this year. That study found that even the standard 6-week preparation period before the start of a season was often insufficient. Teams have had half that time to prepare for the restart of the Premier League. One need only look to patterns emerging in the Bundesliga to know that there is an elevated risk of injury – Australia-based sports scientist Dr. Joel Mason looked at the rate of injury in the opening week of fixtures following the restart of the Bundesliga and [found](#) an average of 0.88 injuries per game, compared to just 0.27 injuries per game on average – a significant increase not altogether unsurprising following a long period without training, but something which leagues should be taking into consideration.

Support for under-funded sports

It is also important to consider the rights of athletes as workers, who will be affected financially by this crisis in much the same way as workers in other sectors, particularly Olympic athletes competing in less well-funded sports. With the postponement of the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, an athletes' exposure to individual sponsorship opportunities is delayed, and athletes will have to find funding to support their training for another year. According to [UK Sport](#), the best-funded Olympic disciplines are rowing, cycling and athletics, receiving £30 million, £29 million and £26 million respectively. When comparing these figures to sports like archery or karate which receive just £630,000 respectively, it is easy to understand the financial burden many athletes will face.

Furthermore, overall funding for Olympic sports equates to roughly £266 million compared to funding for Paralympic sports, which receive just £75 million. It is important that priority for financial recovery be given to those sports and athletes who come from less well-funded areas of the sector.

2. What has been the immediate impact of COVID-19 on women's sport and what are the likely long-term consequences?

Most of the discussion on return to play and the economic impacts to the sport sector has focused on the impact on elite (and mostly male) sport, yet typically under-funded areas, such as women's sport, will face greater challenges.

Apparent prioritisation of men's sport

Women's sport in the UK this summer has largely been cancelled, while men's sport is now starting to return – this imbalance reinforces the entrenched belief that men's sport matters more than women's sport. One example is in football: the Football Association (FA) took the decision first to void all tiers of the women's season below the National League, and ultimately, cancel the Women's Super League season. They also offered no COVID-19 specific financial support, which would have helped the women's game return safely. This is in sharp contrast to the approach taken with the Premier League, which has been adamant since the start of the pandemic that the men's game would return. There are multiple reasons why the men's game has come back while the women's has been cancelled. These include different financial models such as:

- Broadcast structures: The Premier League would have to return huge sums of money to broadcasters if the men's season had been cancelled, which is not true for the women's game. However, this will have a longer term impact for women as most of their revenues come from ticket sales as opposed to broadcasting – a particularly problematic economic model should sport be played behind closed doors for the foreseeable future
- Ownership models: The Premier League is a private, for-profit entity, while the FA is a sport governing body with fewer resources. This did not however prevent Tottenham Hotspur from [securing a £175 million loan](#) from the Bank of England to ease the impact of coronavirus ([16x more](#) than the FA gave to the whole of women's football in 2018/2019)

Regardless of the reasons, [this was a lost opportunity for women's football](#) – there was a captive audience keen to watch football during the lockdown, which offered an ideal opportunity for women's football to come back first and increase its visibility.

Football is not the only sport appearing to prioritise the men however:

- The Rugby Football Union (RFU) made a [decision](#) early on to end the women's season, whereas the Premiership opted to postpone the season until 15 August.
- In cycling, [The Cyclists' Alliance \(TCA\)](#) – a group representing professional athletes on the UCI Women's World Tour – criticised the governing body for prioritising the men's race calendar over the women's, with [new tour dates](#) announced for the Tour

de France, while major British women's races such as the Tour de Yorkshire and the Women's Tour have been cancelled.

Women's sport in jeopardy

Summer 2019 was a high point for women's sport in the UK, with both the FIFA Women's World Cup and the Vitality Netball World Cup attracting huge viewership, and resulting in a boom in grassroots participation, yet COVID-19 threatens to erase this progress. In contrast to last year, women's sport has become all but invisible as important opportunities to showcase gender equality in sport have now been postponed. The Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics, for example, were set to have an almost [perfect gender balance](#) in athlete representation (49:51 female to male ratio), and with Olympic coverage being an important outlet for greater exposure of women's sport, the postponement of the Games is leaving a large hole for in the women's sporting calendar.

There are several additional examples of women's sport being jeopardised:

- Cricket: The Hundred competition should have had [an equal number of women's and men's franchises take part for the first time](#) with equal prize money – all broadcast on BBC and Sky, but this has now been postponed until 2021.
- Netball: Even with a World Cup win and a Commonwealth gold medal, [England Netball has said](#) that teams in their Vitality Netball Superleague have had to put many staff on furlough. Without the top teams competing, there is no revenue from ticket sales or broadcasting, which is a critical risk to the future of the sport.
- Football: As mentioned, the FA decided to cut the women's season and has provided no financial support. This is in sharp contrast to Germany, where the richest men's clubs [donated \\$2 million USD to ensure the women's league could continue](#). They are now one of the only women's football leagues in the world to return to play, showing that cooperation and a commitment to equity can make the difference.

Financial burden

Less than a year after a [record breaking 11.7 million people](#) in the UK tuned in to watch the semi-final World Cup game between England and the United States, [many female football players find themselves in precarious positions](#). The global football players union FIFPro outlines issues including female leagues being less well-established, and players being on lower salaries with fewer benefits, including health insurance, as some of the reasons for this financial insecurity in their recently published [report](#). This is in spite of the fact that women's football has often been seen as ["the biggest growth opportunity"](#) in an already saturated football market.

This is an issue across numerous other sports, where men are much more likely to have full-time, multi-year contracts, and their salaries are on average much higher. This is in part due to the fact that unlike men's sports, many women's sports are semi-professional as athletes simply are not paid enough to go full-time. In cricket for example, while the elite men will return to play for England from 8 July, and county players are on contracts, the women are reliant on events like The Hundred for much of their income. They stood to earn about £15,000 each from participation in the tournament, but will now receive just 20% of that. This loss of income has [caused concern that some women cricketers will have to quit the](#)

[sport and find other jobs](#). The cancellation and postponement of events has exacerbated inequalities across multiple sports which Professor Laura McAllister, former head of Sport Wales, [sums up](#) by saying “*the women’s side is regarded as more of an afterthought.*”

Additional barriers

Not only are the gains made in elite women’s sport threatened by COVID-19, but there is additional concern that the pandemic has reversed past gains in women’s physical activity levels, and that it will have a long-term impact on women’s opportunities to be active. According to [Sport England data](#) collected on a weekly basis across April and May 2020, women’s activity levels were on a downward trend – at their worst, the gap between men and women was 10%, with only 28% of women meeting weekly activity guidelines. Women themselves were worried about the impact of the lockdown on their physical activity: in a quantitative survey undertaken by Women in Sport, 39% of women said they were concerned they were losing their fitness and that it would have a long-term impact. Additional qualitative research (to be published in June 2020) suggests that this is exacerbated due to an amplification of gender stereotypical behaviour during lockdown.

Women’s opportunities to be active during lockdown affects two groups in particular: mothers and women in their 70s and 80s. Mothers said they were struggling to juggle home school, jobs, cooking and cleaning, and according to an [Institute for Fiscal Studies report](#), mothers were 50% more likely to be interrupted during work than fathers. The starkest gender divide was amongst mothers earning £20,000 or less: they were doing 3.9 hours of childcare every day, while fathers in the same income bracket were only doing 2.4 hours. As for women in their 70s and 80s, they were concerned that their lack of activity during lockdown would have significant, irreversible impacts on their health.

Women’s concerns about COVID-19 will have a bearing on their willingness to return to activity when it restarts, especially indoor activity. Multiple [studies](#) throughout lockdown have shown that women are more worried about COVID-19 than men. Women are also more likely than men to take part in indoor activities: [20% of women regularly attended fitness classes pre-lockdown](#).¹ Because these activities are indoors and often in a gym setting, fitness classes will likely be one of the last activities to re-open. Even when fitness classes are available again, they will have to limit participation to allow for social distancing.

3. What has been the immediate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) athletes and communities and what are the likely long-term consequences?

Women’s sport and physical activity is one sub-sector that requires particular attention of DCMS, as is the impact of COVID-19 on BAME athletes and communities.

Increased health risk

There is strong evidence to suggest that persons from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities are more likely to die from COVID-19 than their white counterparts. A review published by [Public Health England](#) says that people of Bangladeshi origin are the

¹ The top three physical activities for men are walking, running and cycling. For women, they are walking, running and fitness classes.

most at risk, while those from other Asian, Caribbean and Black ethnicities have between a [10-50% greater risk of death](#) than white ethnicities. Another [study](#) found that the risk of hospitalisation among people from Black ethnic backgrounds is four times higher compared to people from White ethnicities. A common explanation for this is often socioeconomic, yet even when adjusted for socio-economic status, lifestyle and underlying health conditions, the figure was still 2.5x higher for Black people and roughly 1.5x higher for Asians. The report concludes that there are “clear ethnic differences in risk of hospitalisation for COVID-19 which do not appear to be fully explained by known explanatory factors”. The [recommendations](#) of the report include: better data collection around race and ethnicity to monitor impacts on these communities, supporting further research with participation of ethnic minorities to understand the increased risks and how to reduce them, and targeting ethnic minorities with culturally sensitive health messages that address conditions commonly affecting these communities including diabetes and high blood pressure (issues a healthy active lifestyle would also help in combatting).

Concerns for BAME athletes and workers

Given the uncertainty around why BAME people are experiencing higher death and hospital rates, it is understandable that many [BAME players have expressed concern](#) over return to play. This is particularly true in the Premier League, where 1/3 athletes are from a BAME background. Watford FC Captain Troy Deeney was [one of several players](#) who did not take part in small-group training when it restarted in mid-May after three people in the playing and coaching staff tested positive. Similar concerns were echoed by Leyton Orient footballer Jobi McAnuff who [said](#) that there were a lot of questions remaining, and until these were answered, “there will still be a lot of reservations from those sports that involve contact”. He also mentioned a significant issue with the fact that footballers have not been consulted at Premier League and Champions League level, saying no one asked them if they were comfortable. In many BAME communities, these athletes are seen as role models and their concerns will resonate throughout the community.

Athletes from other sporting disciplines, including boxing and [athletics](#), have also expressed their concern. Nevertheless, many athletes feel they have little choice but to return as they are on performance-based contracts and therefore need to compete in order to earn money. World Athletics has started to roll-out a phased down version of the Diamond League in response to this, starting with the so-called ‘[Impossible Games](#)’ staged both virtually and in an empty Bislett Stadium in Oslo in mid-June. While innovative, athletics is a sport with many athletes from BAME backgrounds, and if these communities are at higher risk, there is an urgent need to factor this into return to play protocols. Furthermore, as return to play in the case of sports like athletics and some smaller sports is motivated by financial hardship of athletes, there should be an additional duty of care placed on sports bodies and event organisers.

In addition to the risks to athletes, it is relevant to note that there appears to be greater impacts on those who work in and around the sport industry – a recent [study](#) from the Office for National Statistics that looked at COVID-19 related deaths among the workforce found that men who worked in ‘low skilled elementary occupations’ such as construction,

security and cleaning (all of which are needed around sporting venues) had the highest death rates compared to other professions (including those who work in the care sector) experiencing 21.4 deaths per 100,000, compared to an average of 9.9 deaths per 100,000 men in the working age population (20 to 64 years old). When overlaying this data with [another study](#) from the ONS which looks at ethnicity by occupation, it was found that people from BAME ethnicities accounted for 60% of the 'low skilled elementary' workforce. While not all of these people work in sport, and while these numbers only show correlations, it is nevertheless important to note the disproportionate impact of low-skilled workers and BAME populations, and factor this into return to play protocols.

Lack of representation in leadership positions

Finally, a key question that needs to be asked is why these findings are not being given greater care in return to play protocols and how these inequalities came to exist in the first place. The lack of BAME representation on the Boards of almost all sports governing bodies in the UK could give an indication. The Telegraph [revealed](#) a shocking lack of ethnic diversity on Boards across national sports governing bodies, which shows the following numbers of Black Board members:

- The Football Association – 0/10
- Rugby Football Union – 0/14
- Swim England – 0/12
- UK Athletics – 1/9
- British Cycling – 0/12
- Sport England – 2/11
- UK Sport – 0/10

While issues around lack of diversity are systemic and pre-date the COVID-19 pandemic, the current crisis has revealed what this lack of diversity and representation can mean.

4. What is the immediate impact of COVID-19 on trafficking and modern slavery in the sport sector and what are the likely long-term impacts?

While female workers and BAME workers bare more significant impacts due to existing inequalities, so too do migrant workers – this is no different in the sport sector. Workers who may have been trafficked or are victims of modern slavery are particularly vulnerable as they face social isolation and a lack of access to resources.

Lack of reporting

Despite the lack of UK-based empirical evidence, a recent roundtable conducted by Mission 89 titled "*Impact of the coronavirus pandemic and restrictions imposed on the lives of migrant footballers in Istanbul*" found vital information regarding the daily struggles faced by migrant footballers, some of whom have been victims of trafficking. One of the main impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the issue of trafficking is the lack of reporting during this time, as football migration and trafficking appears to be of low priority, and its victims are at the bottom of the pyramid in terms of welfare and protection.

While the impact of COVID-19 on victims of trafficking in sport in Turkey will not be identical to the UK, as socio-political factors such as the way local governments are funded has a significant influence, parallels can be drawn and one should expect similarities, as there does

not seem to be any formal regulations in place that provide welfare support to victims of trafficking in sport in the UK during the pandemic either.

Lack of access to support services

Athletes/players from outside the EU currently require a [*Tier 5 \(Temporary-Creative and sporting\)*](#) visa or [*Tier 2 \(Sportsperson\)*](#) visa. With either of these visas, athletes have access to the NHS and have the right to legally work for up to 20 hours a week. Most victims of trafficking in sport obviously do not have this visa, and hence are unable to access healthcare facilities or work legally. During the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, these basic life necessities become even more crucial to victims of trafficking and irregular migrants in sport. In terms of support for victims of trafficking in sport, there have been no formal measures that have been taken by the DCMS so far.

With the economic uncertainties that many European football clubs have to face post-COVID-19, there is going to be less funding available for the recruitment of new players, particularly for clubs in the lower divisions. The impact of reduced spending in Europe will impact many of the smaller football clubs that are the first ports of call for Africans in the journey to Europe. Hence, it is quite clear that the current environment is ripe for further exploitation of desperate players from Africa by traffickers and unscrupulous intermediaries. A formal and easily accessible basic needs services that caters for victims of trafficking in sport, as well as illegal migrants, needs to be established.

Uncertain contracts

As mentioned above, the financial instability of teams and clubs across all sport in the UK will have a tremendous impact on processes such as recruitment and contract extensions that affect sport migrants. It is at lower league clubs that the financial strain will be felt the most, which would also put further scrutiny on the sustainability of certain sport leagues and clubs in a decade where they have often been deemed as “too big to fail”. Ironically, there is perhaps a light at the tunnel to all this in the form of greater scrutiny on the recruitment practices of clubs, and with it, the identification of instances of football trafficking that would have otherwise gone on unnoticed, or simply ignored. This is an area whereby the DCMS, in partnership with its governmental and non-governmental partners, should be proactive to and stay vigilant.

5. How effectively has the support provided by DCMS and arm’s length bodies addressed the sector’s needs?

In [publishing](#) its ‘stage three guidance’ – the third instalment in a series of guidelines outlining the return of elite sporting competition, DCMS said they consulted the “Deputy Chief Medical Officer of England, Public Health England, and medical representatives from across the Olympics, Paralympics and other sports governing bodies”, however it does not mention any consultation with athletes themselves, nor which sports were represented in consultation with governing bodies. This is deeply concerning as athletes are the ones who are potentially putting themselves at highest risk, and many of the well-represented sports on national and international medical committees are not the sports who will need the most support in emerging from this crisis. Furthermore in looking at issues faced in women’s

sport, the guidelines do not seem to address issues specific to these sports. For example, in women's football, most revenue is generated on match day through ticket sales. If matches are forced to play behind closed doors, the outgoing expenses for many women's sides will return to close to pre-pandemic levels, but their income will be next to nothing.

Sport England has however setup a [Community Emergency Fund](#) whose purpose is to provide community sport and physical activity organisations with support if they are experiencing short-term financial hardship or the threat of ceased operations due to COVID-19. In particular, the Fund prioritises organisations who:

- Deliver activities in deprived areas
- Work with the following groups in particular: women and girls, LGBTI+, persons with disabilities, Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups and older people
- Can demonstrate that they have been actively staying in touch with their participants during this period
- Can demonstrate that they risk closure of operations without support

While the fund was setup with community and grassroots funds in mind, the criteria used can and should be applied by DCMS to the wider sport sector.

6. What lessons can be learned from how DCMS, arm's-length bodies and the sector have dealt with COVID-19?

The coronavirus crisis is unprecedented and the situation continues to evolve quickly. With global daily cases still on the rise, the threat of a second wave remains significant. Nevertheless, sport will have an increasingly important role to play in bringing people back together. Sporting activities and events are the perfect opportunity to do this following months of physical distancing.

There are several lessons however that can be learned to ensure that in the event of a second wave or another crisis, the response is better, including:

- ✓ When considering economic support packages, consider which sub-sectors (be it small sports, women's sport, grassroots sport, sport for persons with disabilities etc.) are likely to be more severely impacted, and prioritise them. The criteria used by Sport England's Community Emergency Fund is a good start
- ✓ Ensure that bodies that allocate funding, such as UK Sport and Sport England, have procedures to effectively consult athletes on decisions affecting them, particularly female athletes, and athletes of colour, and keep them informed
- ✓ Rather than prioritising guidance on return to play, prioritise guidelines for sports bodies on how to manage postponement and furlough schemes, so that athletes are not left in precarious, uncertain positions, and policies are implemented consistently
- ✓ Capture as much data as possible as early as possible to better understand whether certain groups are more vulnerable, and factor this in to return to play plans, including for workers around the stadiums, not just for athletes
- ✓ Be more proactive and vigilant to issues around trafficking that are more exacerbated in times of crisis

7. How might the sector evolve after COVID-19, and how can DCMS support such innovation to deal with future challenges?

DCMS has a critical role to play in ensuring that the sport sector in the UK evolves in a positive way following this crisis and that it is prepared in the event of a second wave. Below are a series of recommendations:

- ✓ Share the view that the goal should not be to rebuild what we had, but to build a better, fairer and more equitable sport sector across the UK
- ✓ Take immediate steps to ensure that no athletes are being forced to sign insurance liability waivers in any leagues operating in the UK
- ✓ Where health and safety measures required for safe return to play cannot be guaranteed, either support these sports with the necessary funding or testing kits to make this possible, or provide support to ensure their survival until social distancing measures are further relaxed
- ✓ When using public funds, criteria for the equal distribution of funds to men's and women's disciplines should be a condition of funding to sports governing bodies. Any public money spent on bailing out men's elite sport should have conditions that protect women's sport
- ✓ Moving forward, explore what government incentives may be required to ensure that the economic models between men's and women's sports do not continue to perpetuate inequality
- ✓ Support the urgent implementation of recommendations from Public Health England's study on the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on BAME ethnicities, and ensure these recommendations get implemented in the sport sector
- ✓ Ensure that new and existing return to play plans factor in specific vulnerabilities, including to support workers, and involve these communities in consultation
- ✓ Set minimum standards for diversity on Boards of national sports bodies, especially those that receive government funding
- ✓ Introduce formal measures providing basic needs services to support the most vulnerable, particularly migrant workers and victims of trafficking

About the Centre for Sport and Human Rights: The Centre for Sport and Human Rights is a human rights organisation for the world of sport. It aims to support the prevention of human rights harms from occurring through sport, support access for effective remedy where harms have occurred, and promote a positive human rights legacy from sport and sporting events. For more information, please visit: www.sporhumanrights.org

About the APPG on Sport, Modern Slavery and Human Rights: This APPG is co-chaired by Baroness Young of Hornsey and Alex Norris MP and is joined by Lord Colin Moynihan and Darren Jones MP, with the UN Global Compact Network UK and the Centre for Sport and Human Rights acting as secretariat. Its mission is to find solutions to pressing human rights problems affecting large scale sporting events around the world, focusing on the human rights impacts of mega-sporting events, the impacts of the UK Modern Slavery Act on professional sport companies and discrimination in sport. For more information, please visit: www.appgshr.org.uk