

**Letter to the Prime Minister,**

**Copied to:**

**Nadine Dorries, Secretary of State for DCMS**

**Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities**

**Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for Health**

**Nadhim Zahawi, Secretary of State for Education**

**Nigel Huddleston, Minister for Sport**

**Elena Narozanski, No.10**

**Tim Hollingsworth, Chief Executive Officer of Sport England**

**NEW NATIONAL TASKFORCE PROPOSED TO HARNESS TEAM SPORTS AND ADDRESS THE INACTIVITY AND HEALTH CRISIS AMONG OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Dear Prime Minister,

We write to you following yesterday's publication of the Sport England's Active Lives Children Survey, and the extremely worrying findings which show that **four million** children aged between 5 and 16 failed to meet minimum recommended activity levels during the last year. Organised team sport has been hit particularly hard, with only **49%** of our nation's children participating now compared to **61%** pre-pandemic. These results unfortunately show that stubborn inequalities persist, with girls, low affluence families, those with a disability and black and ethnic children all featuring among the groups who fair worst in terms of participation.

Clearly the pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on children's activity levels. This is further compounded by the state of PE in schools, with recent Government Statistics showing that the number of PE teachers in England has declined by 9.6% over the last ten years. In addition, over 50,000 hours of PE were lost from English secondary schools in the last decade. If we do not act swiftly and decisively, we risk seeing a lasting and damaging impact to our children's physical and mental wellbeing.

Team sports are extremely well positioned to help tackle this inactivity crisis head on. As the CEOs of our nation's most popular sports, we absolutely recognise our responsibility to support children and young people. We need to make sure that our offer to them is as broad, accessible, and inviting as possible, so that they and their families can benefit from getting back to sport and improving their activity levels.

We also recognise that it is vital that we take a collaborative approach as team sports, to fight rising inactivity and obesity levels in children. As part of our joint work on this, we are delighted to share with you our new report on '*The Social and Economic Value of Childhood Sport Participation in England*'.

The report reinforces the **specific and unique benefits that taking part in team sports** provide to children and young people. It also sets out that:

- 49% of children and young people take part each week across our five sports, which contributes £4.5 billion in value annually.
- Taking part in team sports is proven to boost social trust, reduce juvenile crimes and enhance physical and mental wellbeing, with children reporting **12% higher life satisfaction** and **6% higher happiness**.

- This also includes **enhanced educational skills**, with children who participate in sport reporting 14% **higher confidence** and 9% **higher teamwork skills** – a benefit which is greater in girls than boys.
- This positive impact is lasting, with youth sport participants almost **two times** more likely to have healthy habits in adulthood.
- We also see a **direct positive correlation between participation in team sports and employability**; young graduates who take part in sport earn on average **£6,965** more and are **2.5%** less likely to be unemployed compared to those who do not play sport.

We will be organising a public launch of this report in the New Year and plan to use this event to showcase some of our cross-sport programmes for young people, which we believe form part of the solution to this important issue. We will follow up with a formal invite but would be extremely grateful if this is something you and your cabinet ministers could support.

We stand ready to fully support the Government at this crucial time and are keen to mobilise our networks and programmes to positive effect. Team sports have an important and unique role to play in getting children and young people active and in providing them with a wide range of benefits. **To this end, we ask that you consider creating a new national taskforce with Government and team sports to address the health and social crisis facing our children.** We believe that our collective leverage, funding, and influence could be extremely powerful if effectively harnessed through such a group.

We would be very happy to meet to discuss further and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Tom Harrison



Nick Pink



Fran Connolly



Bill Sweeney



Mark Bullingham