House of Commons

Culture, Media and Sport Committee

Game On: Community and school sport

Fourth Report of Session 2024–26

HC 593

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Contents

Summary 1

Introduction 3

1 Healthy Finances 5

Funding for community sport 5

International comparisons 6

The benefits of investment 7

Innovative and strategic spending 8

Funding application process 10

Alternative formats for applications 10

Funding for school sport and PE 11

2 Healthy Spaces 14

What is our facility stock? 14

Building and maintaining facilities 15

Impact of business rate changes 17

Playing fields and planning consultees 18

Other spaces 20

Opening School Facilities fund 21

3 Healthy Schools 24

School physical activity offering 24

Two hours of physical education 24

Delivering healthy schools 27

Teacher training 27

PE kit 28

Encouraging a fun and inclusive environment 30

Relationships between schools and the community 33

EMBARGOED ADVANCE NOTICE. Not to be published in full, or in part, in any form before 00.01am on Monday 20 April 2026.

4 Healthy Communities **36**

Creating healthy communities 36

Social cohesion 36

Community Health 42

Volunteering 44

The administrative burden 45

5 Conclusion: The Case for a Strategy **48**

Evidence for a single strategy 48

Conclusions and recommendations **51**

Annex: Survey Results **60**

Formal minutes **62**

Witnesses **64**

Published written evidence **66**

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament **70**

EMBARGOED ADVANCE NOTICE Not to be published in full, or in part, in any form before 00.01am on Monday 20 April 2026.

Summary

In this inquiry we set out to understand how well community and school sport is meeting the needs of people across England. There was a mixed picture: strong demand, committed volunteers, and many successful local initiatives, but also persistent financial pressure, limited facilities, a lack of prioritisation in the school curriculum, and an absence of national coordination that prevents the system from operating effectively.

Current funding for school and community sport is insufficient and increasingly unstable. Falling local authority budgets, rising operating costs for facilities, and fragmented, short-term funding streams all make long-term planning difficult. Investment in community sport and physical activity delivers substantial social and economic returns, including reduced illness, improved productivity, and support for people returning to work. Underinvestment is felt most acutely in communities already experiencing significant inequalities. Yet, spending on sport and physical activity as a proportion of Government expenditure lags well behind our European neighbours. We also need a plan to bring in more private investment.

Facilities remain a significant barrier to participation. Ageing infrastructure, uneven provision across the country, and long-standing gaps in national data about the condition and availability of facilities are all problems. Facility closures and deteriorating stock disproportionately affect smaller sports and disadvantaged communities. The previous Government's commitment to produce a national facilities strategy was not delivered.

Schools play a central role in shaping young people's lifelong relationship with physical activity, yet provision is inconsistent. Issues include declining curriculum time for PE, variable teacher training, restrictive or uncomfortable kit policies, and a narrow curriculum offer that does not meet the needs of many children—particularly girls, pupils with SEND, and those who are already less active. Schools also face difficulty coordinating with local clubs and community organisations because of capacity constraints and the loss of previous partnership structures.

Community sport offers wider social, health and economic benefits, but these are unevenly realised. Community-based programmes help build social cohesion, support mental and physical health, and provide essential opportunities for volunteers. However, provision is not distributed evenly, with the greatest barriers to participation found in areas experiencing both

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high deprivation and low levels of community infrastructure. Volunteers, who underpin delivery across the system, face increasing administrative and compliance burdens.

Physical activity spans multiple policy domains—education, health, local government, planning, transport and community development—yet responsibilities remain siloed. The absence of a single cross-Government framework to align investment, accountability and delivery is acutely felt. Without such a framework, progress will continue to depend heavily on local capacity and short-term programmes. We recommend a cross-Government strategy to bring together health, education, local government and community policy around a shared objective: increasing physical activity and widening participation in both community and school sport.

The benefits are clear; the evidence is overwhelming. What is missing is urgency. Only a decisive national commitment—backed by stable funding, better facilities and a coherent, cross-government strategy—will deliver the active, healthier nation we need.

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Introduction

1. Sport and physical activity play an essential role in the health of individuals and the strength of communities. They contribute to improved physical and mental health and wellbeing, support educational outcomes and foster social cohesion. It is therefore important for people across the country to have access to sport and physical activity, whether through schools, community clubs or informal local provision. So many opportunities are reliant on local organisations and volunteers, and it is important that they are given the support and resources to do their job effectively.

2. Against this backdrop, we launched our inquiry Game On: Community and School Sport in November 2024 to examine the health of sport at a local level and to consider how opportunities for people of all ages to be active could be sustained and expanded.[1] We explored the funding landscape for grassroots and school sport, the pressures facing local authorities and facility providers, and the support required by volunteers who underpin community sport. We also investigated how participation among underrepresented groups could be increased and how children could develop a positive, lifelong relationship with physical activity. In doing so, we considered the respective roles of national and local government, sports governing bodies, clubs and community organisations, and how better alignment between them could improve the delivery of school and grassroots sport, including through greater use of school facilities and ensuring every child had the chance to be active, confident and engaged within the school environment.

3. Given the overlapping nature of school and community sport, the report does not draw hard boundaries between "school" and "community" issues in every chapter. Matters clearly specific to the school environment, particularly those relating to curriculum time, teaching standards and the school-day experience, are addressed in the 'Healthy Schools' chapter. The question of where to draw the line between sport and other forms of physical activity is also not straightforward: in this report we have therefore taken a broad view of sport as encompassing physical exercise in different forms—be it team sport or more individual pursuits.

4. We received 105 written submissions following the call for evidence, which closed on 12 January 2025. We held five oral evidence sessions with a wide range of stakeholders from across the sector, concluding with both

1 UK Parliament, CMS Committee, Game On: Community and school sport Inquiry

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Stephanie Peacock MP (Minister for Sport, Media, Civil Society and Youth) and Catherine McKinnell MP (then Minister for School Standards), alongside their officials.[2] The report also draws on a one-off evidence session on 'Play'.[3] We wanted to ensure the voices of young people were reflected in our work and therefore also conducted a survey of more than 1,700 school-aged children, gathering insights into their experiences of physical education and school sport.[4] We are grateful to all those who contributed to this inquiry.

5. This report draws together that evidence. It considers the financial, structural and cultural barriers limiting participation; the condition and availability of community and school facilities; and the importance of well-trained teachers and volunteers. Finally, it brings these themes together and examines the ways in which coordinated national leadership could unlock the wider health, social and economic benefits of a more active nation.

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2 Qq220–272
3 Oral evidence: State of Play: Play, HC 1122, 2 September 2025
4 See Annex

1 Healthy Finances

6. In this chapter, we consider the financial challenges faced by school and community sport, consider how the Government has responded and look at what steps might be taken to increase the amount of funding available.

Funding for community sport

7. Public funding for community sport and leisure comes primarily from local government budgets, Sport England's Exchequer and National Lottery funding (around £300 million annually), and developer contributions such as the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106, which are earmarked for specific projects and pooled until sufficient for major capital works. The Local Government Association (LGA) told us that councils spent £1.4 billion a year in England on public sport and leisure services.[5] In June 2025, the Government announced that it was allocating £400 million to grassroots sport, with the first allocation coming in January 2026. The Government said that the money would be used for new and upgraded grassroots sport facilities in communities across the country.[6]

8. However, we received concerns through evidence that the funding situation for community sport was inadequate and getting worse. Swim England told us that local authorities had seen £2.3 billion in real-terms fall in spend on culture and leisure since 2010,[7] whilst the LGA said councils had had to prioritise statutory services, squeezing discretionary spend on sport and leisure.[8] Peter Mason, Leader of the London Borough of Ealing Council, told us that around £875 million would be needed to "bring the two thirds of public facilities that are currently not fit for purpose up to modern standards".[9] In addition, he said that the 2021 energy crisis had pushed operating costs up sharply, often by around 200%, leading to temporary or permanent closures of local sports facilities.[10] The unfolding situation in the Persian Gulf is likely to see leisure facilities encountering similar challenges again. Several witnesses told us that the existing "funding patchwork"

5 Local Government Association (GAM0074)
6 Gov.uk, Game changer for the nation, 19 June 2025; Gov.uk, New and upgraded grassroots sport facilities to get the UK active, 27 January 2026
7 Swim England (GAM0111)
8 Local Government Association (GAM0074)
9 Q166
10 Q170

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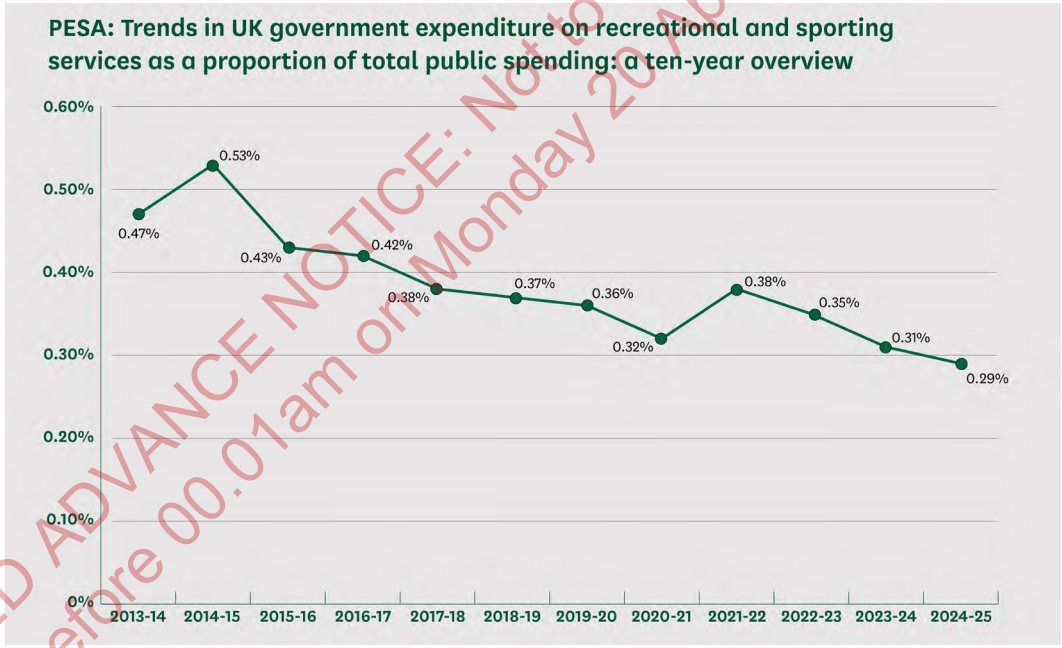
was insufficiently stable or consistent, and stressed that sustained, multi-year public investment was essential to safeguard facilities, support participation, and prevent further long-term decline across the sector.[11]

International comparisons

9. The Sport and Recreation Alliance told us that the UK was near the bottom of the table in Europe in terms of general government expenditure on sport and recreation.[12] Eurostat compiles internationally comparable public spending using the Classification of functions of government (COFOG) classification.[13] In 2023, European countries on average devoted around 0.8% of total public expenditure to recreational and sporting services.[14] By contrast, UK Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses (PESA 2025) recorded around 0.3% (£3.8 billion) for the equivalent COFOG category ('recreational and sporting services').[15] This UK proportion of expenditure has also been declining over the last 10 years, showing that successive Governments have not prioritised spending in this area, as shown by the chart below.



Source: Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2025, Table 5.2

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11 See, for example, Local Government Association (GAM0074), LTA (GAM0080), Community Leisure UK (GAM0101), British Gymnastics (GAM0109), Sport and Recreation Alliance (GAM0110), Swim England (GAM0111)

12 Sport and Recreation Alliance (GAM0110)

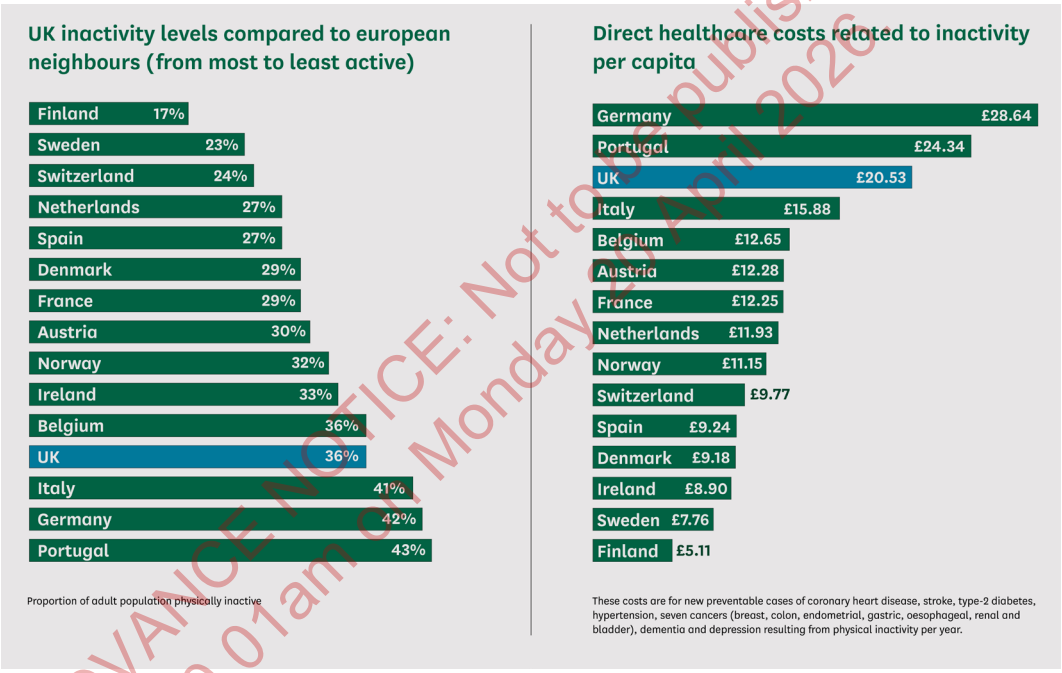
13 Eurostat, Glossary:Classification of the functions of government (COFOG)

14 Eurostat - General government expenditure on recreational and sporting services, 2022 and 2023 (% of total expenditure) (%)

15 Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2025, Table 5.2

The benefits of investment

10. Sport England told us that each £1 invested in community sport and physical activity generated £4.21 in social and economic value.[16] It estimated that activity prevented more than 3.3 million cases of chronic conditions each year—including depression, back pain and type 2 diabetes—and saved nearly £6 billion through productivity gains from reduced sickness absence.[17] The Sport and Recreation Alliance argued that the UK underperformed on inactivity relative to comparable European nations and that closing this gap would unlock substantial gains: around £1 billion in additional healthcare savings, £3.5 billion in GDP, and over £70 billion in wellbeing benefits.[18] The table below shows the correlation between inactivity levels and healthcare costs.



Source: Make the United Kingdom the most active nation in Europe

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16 Sport England (GAM0026)

17 Sport England, Health, wealth and happiness - the £123bn value of activity, 18 November 2025

18 Sport and Recreation Alliance (GAM0110), see also Make the United Kingdom the most active nation in Europe

11. **CONCLUSION**
The evidence shows that funding community sport and physical activity is an investment with high returns, including savings on healthcare costs, productivity gains, and wider wellbeing benefits. The consequences of under-investment are costly. Ageing infrastructure, higher operating costs, and reduced access lead to facility closures, lost participation, and increased pressure on health and social care budgets. While the Government's £400 million will help, further action is needed if we are to keep pace with other European countries.

12. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recognise the pressures on the public finances. Investing in sport, however, by creating a more active population, will eventually lead to significant savings, particularly in the health and welfare budgets. We recommend that the Government increase the 0.3% (£3.8 billion) share of total government expenditure on sport and recreation to at least 0.6% (£7.6 billion at current levels of Government spending) over the next ten years.

Innovative and strategic spending

13. Many witnesses, such as ukactive (the UK's trade body for the physical activity sector),[19] told us that unlocking alternative streams of investment was important. Sport England and the Football Foundation described successful models that leveraged private investment, including crowdfunding (which leverages £2.13 for every £1 that Sport England invest),[20] pension fund investment in the sector,[21] and support around debt guarantees.[22]

14. However, we also heard that corporate social responsibility investment in sport for development remained very low, despite the scale of private sector spending on elite sport sponsorship. Sarah Kaye, Chief Executive of Sported (a charity servicing grassroots sport), commented "we do not believe that is because they don't care. I think they are not making the connection to community support".[23] She added that Barclays had connected its brand to community groups across all regions of England.[24]

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19 Q169
20 Q207
21 Q169
22 Q168
23 Q56
24 Q57

15. Robert Sullivan, Chief Executive of the Football Foundation, spoke about one project where they provided funding for catering units to help facilities generate their own income.[25] Emily Robinson, Chief Executive at London Sport, also told us about innovation to support the cost of energy bills:

> there are some interesting examples from across the world where people have used data servers to heat swimming pools and gyms that can be connected to the electricity power supply, so while you are cycling you are literally generating electricity.[26]

16. Sport England told us that multiple other funders also supported broader grassroots sport activity for wider community benefit, including the National Lottery Community Fund, the London Marathon Trust, and other independent trusts and foundations.[27] The London Marathon Trust told us that they had an "increasing grant capacity", but needed "greater coordination and collaboration across sectors" in order to "support schools and local organisations".[28]

17. **CONCLUSION**
The Government has a role to play in attracting investment into sport from other sources. It is important that public funding is used strategically to unlock additional investment, including private finance, pension funds, and innovative mechanisms such as crowdfunding and debt guarantees. Corporate social responsibility investment in sport for development remains disproportionately low, despite significant private sector spending on elite sport sponsorship.

18. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recommend that the Government play a more proactive role in convening and enabling alternative sources of investment in grassroots sport and physical activity. This should include supporting models that leverage private and institutional finance, encouraging greater alignment between corporate social responsibility, investment and community sport outcomes, and promoting collaboration between public, charitable and private funders.

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25 Q182
26 Q97
27 Sport England (GAM0026)
28 London Marathon (GAM0114)

Funding application process

19. We received evidence suggesting that local clubs and groups found the application process to obtain grants and funding complicated. We heard that this was especially the case "for more volunteer-run grassroots organisations, particularly those with limited capacity or expertise to bid for funding".[29] Sported's October 2023 Pulse Survey of grassroots groups found that 92% of respondents wanted funders to make funding applications easier or more accessible.[30] Jon Cockcroft, Chief Executive of Bowls England, told us that their volunteers, often people in their 70s, had to navigate 44 pages of the code of conduct when trying to access Sport England's 'Movement fund'.[31] Meanwhile, Fund Her Tri (a charity dedicated to increasing access to swimming, cycling, and running for women across the UK) called for a "centralised funding and support platform".[32] British Gymnastics suggested "a centralised portal where clubs could check eligibility before investing time in applications and apply for multiple funding opportunities at one time".[33] When asked about this, Tim Hollingsworth, then Chief Executive of Sport England, said:

> In the past year, we have repositioned how we offer our open fund into a formal single fund called the Movement Fund. We used to have a lot of different pots that were quite hard to navigate, and very often you needed to have significant experience in navigating funding applications. The Movement Fund has tried to create a much more open front door, so we ask what you are looking for and then we do the work behind the scenes to work out whether it is an appropriate investment.[34]

Alternative formats for applications

20. A specific proposal raised with us was the use of alternative funding application methods, particularly video applications. Sarah Kaye of Sported told us that many organisations struggled to articulate the impact of their work and/or to meet governance requirements. She argued for a lightertouch application process, suggesting that video applications could better personalise and showcase the work of community groups, noting that Sported was not alone in advocating this approach.[35] StreetGames[36] and

29 Sport and Recreation Alliance (GAM0110)
30 Sported (GAM0025)
31 Q151
32 Fund Her Tri UK (GAM0028)
33 British Gymnastics (GAM0109)
34 Q206
35 Q53
36 StreetGames (GAM0029)

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the London Youth Games Foundation[37] supported the idea, with the latter suggesting that alternative formats could include pitch and interviewstyle processes to allow organisations to bring their projects to life.

21. When asked about funding processes, Tim Hollingsworth said that accepting video applications was something the organisation could consider.[38] He also highlighted other potential improvements, including a simplified initial application stage to filter out ineligible bids early and enhanced support for applicants outside the traditional website-based process.[39]

22. **CONCLUSION**
Funding application processes can be complex and difficult to navigate, particularly for volunteer-run grassroots organisations with limited capacity and expertise. Lengthy, technical applications and fragmented funding routes act as barriers to access, despite recent efforts by Sport England to simplify provision through the Movement Fund. There is strong support in the community sport sector for alternative, more accessible application formats, including video, pitch and interview-based approaches, alongside clearer eligibility checks and early-stage filtering.

23. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recommend that the Government requires Sport England and other public funders to further simplify and standardise funding application processes to make them more accessible for grassroots organisations. This should include piloting alternative application formats such as video or interview-based submissions, introducing a light-touch initial eligibility stage, and improving pre-application support.

Funding for school sport and PE

24. Funding for school sport and PE is the responsibility of the Department for Education (DfE) and forms part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which is not broken down by subject or curriculum area. Since 2013, annual ring-fenced funding has been provided to primary schools through the Primary

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37 London Youth Games Foundation (GAM0038)
38 Q206
39 As above

PE and Sport Premium.[40] From 2017–18, revenue from the soft drinks industry levy has been used to double the value of the premium from £160 million to £320 million.[41]

25. The DfE has issued guidance on how schools should use PE and Sport Premium funding and how they are held to account for its use. This states that schools must use the funding "to make additional and sustainable improvements to the PE, sport and physical activity" they provide.[42] It should not be used to employ coaches or specialist teachers to cover planning preparation and assessment arrangement, or to teach the minimum requirement of the National Curriculum. Ofsted assesses how schools use the PE and Sport Premium as part of the inspection process. Schools must also publish details of how they use the funding on their websites, along with the impact it has had on pupils' PE and sport participation and attainment.[43]

26. We received multiple submissions suggesting that PE and sport were not being fully harnessed by the education system. The evidence pointed to a variety of shortcomings, including in assessment, benchmarking and accountability. Some submissions were particularly critical of Ofsted.[44] Heathfield Junior School said that:

> Ofsted is meant to evaluate the premium spend, but everyone knows that schools just "make up" a plan and Ofsted do not notice. "The inspectors didn't even bother asking for any evidence".[45]

27. A recent news article suggested that the "Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) [had] proposed cutting all its funding for physical education".[46] When we wrote to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport about this article, asking for a detailed breakdown of school sports funding,[47] the Minister, Stephanie Peacock MP, provided little information and told us that departments had "made no final decisions on funding going forward".[48]

40 Gov.uk, PE and sport premium guidance for primary schools, October 2025
41 House of Commons Library, Physical education, physical activity and sport in English schools, 1 Apil 2025
42 Gov.uk, PE and sport premium guidance for primary schools, October 2025
43 House of Commons Library, Physical education, physical activity and sport in English schools, 1 Apil 2025
44 Chance to Shine (GAM0041), EFL in the Community (GAM0044), Women in Sport (GAM0053), British Gymnastics (GAM0109), New College Leicester, Learning and Sports Village (GAM0010)
45 Heathfield Junior School (GAM0006)
46 Guardian, Government row breaks out over plan to cut spending for PE in England's schools, 27 January 2026
47 Letter from the Chair to Rt Hon Lisa Nandy MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, regarding funding of Physical Education in schools, 29 January 2026
48 Letter from Stephanie Peacock MP, Minister for Sport, Tourism, Civil Society and Youth, regarding funding of Physical Education in schools, 6 February 2026

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28. **CONCLUSION**

There is a lack of transparency and accountability around current funding arrangements for PE and school sport. While the PE and Sport Premium has provided valuable, ring-fenced support for primary schools, inconsistent assessment, limited benchmarking and weak scrutiny by Ofsted mean that funding is not always used effectively or as intended. The fact that the Government could not provide us with further information about wider departmental contributions further highlights the need for greater clarity and oversight.

29. **RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend that the Government strengthen accountability for the PE and Sport Premium by introducing clearer national reporting requirements, consistent benchmarking and more robust scrutiny through Ofsted. As a first step, we invite the Government to set out, in its response to our report, a detailed breakdown of all funding it is allocating for school sport, including information about how much funding individual Government Departments are contributing.

30. **RECOMMENDATION**

We were concerned about reports that the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) had sought to renege on commitments to provide funding for physical education. Given the importance of PE and sport to improving health outcomes, and the potential in the longer-term for consequential savings to the NHS, we expect DHSC to put its share of funding into the school sport system, along with funding from the Department for Education and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

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2 Healthy Spaces

31. In this chapter, we look at the multiple challenges facing grassroot sport facilities in England. They include ageing infrastructure, the loss of formerly privately owned playing fields, pressures on local authority budgets, increasing climate-related disruptions and third-party booking platforms charging inflated rates for venues.[49]

What is our facility stock?

32. We heard that there was a lack of central understanding about the facility stock across the country.[50] Andy Taylor, Chief Executive of Active Partnerships, told us that full usage and availability was unknown, despite local facility football plans and playing pitch strategies (some live and up to date and some not). The Youth Charter[51] and the Active Partnerships Network both called for an audit of national facilities.[52]

33. Sport England manages and maintains a national sports facility database called Active Places.[53] It told us that the database held information on about 120,000 community sports facilities in England, across around 42,000 sites.[54] However, Sport England still recommended a National Facilities Strategy.[55]

34. The former Government's Get Active sport strategy,[56] published in August 2023, committed to working with the sector to develop a National Vision for Facilities before the end of 2023 but this did not materialise.[57]

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49 UCL Students' Union (GAM0022), Sport England (GAM0026)
50 Facility stock means the number of facilities in the country used for sport and physical activity, their usage and availability.
51 Youth Charter (GAM0067)
52 Active Partnerships National Organisation (GAM0083)
53 Sport England, Active Places Power
54 Sport England (GAM0026) - At the time of giving written evidence
55 As above
56 Gov.uk, Get Active: a strategy for the future of sport and physical activity, August 2023
57 Sport England (GAM0026)

35. **CONCLUSION**
We are concerned that gaps in understanding of England's sports facility stock continue to hinder effective planning and investment. While Sport England's Active Places database provides a useful starting point, it does not offer a sufficiently complete or consistent picture of facilities, their usage or availability. The failure to deliver the National Vision for Facilities has left the sector without a clear strategic framework, limiting the ability to identify need and address inequalities in provision.

36. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recommend that within six months of this report being published the Government commission a comprehensive national audit of sports and physical activity facilities, working with Sport England and sector partners. The Government should publish a timetable for the audit and report on progress within 12 months.

Building and maintaining facilities

37. It was made clear to us that there was a correlation between access to appropriate, safe, inclusive and affordable facilities and increased activity levels.[58] Lisa Wainwright, Chief Executive of the Sport and Recreation Alliance, told us that we "know from the ONS in 2024 that where there are facilities—surprise, surprise—more people take part in sports. It is a very simple correlation".[59] ukactive noted that offering a range of sports increased opportunity and that one way to achieve this was by ensuring facilities had multiple uses, such as multi-use leisure centres.[60] In a September 2025 announcement about National Basketball Association (NBA) funding, the Government said that it would also ensure facilities could "provide opportunities to play other sports to ensure as many people as possible in England benefit from this investment".[61]

38. Despite this, Olympic swimmer Anna Hopkin told us about the number of swimming pool closures over recent years, saying that facilities needed to be "better supported".[62] Research from Swim England found that 500

58 ONS, More adults are active in areas with a higher number of sports facilities, 7 March 2024
59 Q59
60 Letter from Huw Edwards, Chief Executive, ukactive, regarding oral evidence follow-up, dated 26 June 2025
61 Gov.uk, NBA and UK Government announce comprehensive plan to elevate basketball in the UK, 17 September 2025
62 Q28

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swimming pools had been lost since 2010, "34,859 square metres of water space". They noted that almost half (42%) of the pools lost in that time had been lost since 2020.[63]

39. A knock-on effect of the diminishing availability of facilities is that smaller groups find it harder to access what is left, as Active Partnerships noted in its evidence.[64] Sarah Kaye, Chief Executive, of Sported said that "often the better-financed venues—generally football—are securing those [available school venues] at the expense of those putting vital provisions [on] for the deprived and underserved communities".[65] Research commissioned by Sky also found that 29% of 11–18 year-old girls reported that the boys teams at their school or college got priority booking for pitches and facilities.[66] Tim Hollingsworth, told us that the rise in demand in women and girl's sport had made facilities stock increasingly important, noting that historically, sports clubs, community groups and facilities had not been as welcoming to women and girls.[67]

40. Robert Sullivan, Chief Executive of the Football Foundation told us how, to address this issue, his organisation set terms and conditions for any grant it awarded:

> We will not award a grant to a local community club or school unless we can see the programme of usage on that site and the different demographics and the under-represented groups who will use it.[68]

41. Emily Robinson, Chief Executive of London Sport, told us that ultimately, "we need more capital funding. There is very little you can do with ageing stock unless you renew those facilities".[69] The Local Government Association (LGA) told us that councils had been forced to prioritise statutory responsibilities.[70] Peter Mason, Leader of the London Borough of Ealing Council, highlighted an £8.4 billion funding gap and told us this was limiting the resources available for sports and leisure services. He argued that, without both a statutory duty to provide these facilities and the funding to accompany it, those services and facilities would face a further decline in provision.[71]

63 Swim England, Pace of swimming pool closures increasing warn Swim England and ukactive, 4 June 2025
64 Active Partnerships National Organisation (GAM0083)
65 Q58
66 Sky/Public First, Game Changing: How sport gives every girl a better chance, 11 September 2025
67 Q198
68 Q181
69 Q97
70 Local Government Association (GAM0074)
71 Q174, Q183

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42. We asked Minister Peacock whether there should be a statutory requirement on councils to provide these sports facilities as recommended by the LGA. She said:

> While I think there has been a generous funding settlement from the Government Department, clearly there have been significant cuts in the last 15 years [...] We want to work together with local authorities and with Sport England as a Government to make sure that local areas can have the facilities that they need. That is why we are focused on this place-based, community-led funding model.[72]

We will consider the place-based model in Chapter 4.

43. **CONCLUSION**
Access to appropriate, safe, inclusive and affordable sports facilities is closely linked to participation. Yet while demand, particularly from women and girls, is rising, facility provision is declining due to closures, ageing infrastructure and uneven availability. Smaller sports, grassroots organisations and underserved communities are disproportionately affected and increasingly squeezed out by better-resourced users. Without sustained capital investment, improved planning and stronger safeguards for inclusive access, participation and equality will continue to erode as councils have to prioritise their statutory obligations.

44. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recommend that a statutory duty be placed on local authorities to provide sporting and leisure facilities in their communities. We further recommend that, as part of the wider increase in spending on sport and recreation, the Government provide councils with extra capital funding sufficient to enable them to meet this duty. As we have said, spending on sport and recreation should be seen as investment.

Impact of business rate changes

45. After we finished taking evidence, we became aware of concerns about the potential for business rate changes to impact the financial sustainability of existing facilities. On 1 April 2026, the Government introduced new retail, hospitality and leisure (RHL) business rate multipliers to replace the 40% discount for RHL premises, combined with revaluation of rateable values.[73] We heard concerns that upcoming changes to business rates could impose

72 Q263
73 Gov.uk, Effects of the business rates retail, hospitality and leisure multipliers and high-value multiplier, 26 November 2025

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substantial additional costs on sports clubs and facilities, reducing the resources they can reinvest or increasing prices for participants. The Sport and Recreation Alliance warned that reforms might have a significant financial impact across the sector, from grassroots clubs to major venues.[74] ukactive highlighted that independent leisure facilities were particularly exposed to the changes and that higher business rates could force many to close, with knock-on effects for local economies and for community health and wellbeing.[75]

46. **CONCLUSION**

Whilst at this stage it is not possible to evaluate the scale of the impact of business rate changes on the grassroots sport sector as a whole, it is important that any negative effects on sports clubs and facilities are mitigated, given that many facilities are already under significant financial pressure.

RECOMMENDATION

We ask the Government to set out in its response to our report the measures it intends to take to relieve any adverse effects on sporting facilities from its recent business rate changes. We further recommend that the Government undertake a full impact assessment to ensure that potential economic, social, and operational consequences for sport and leisure facilities are fully understood.

Playing fields and planning consultees

47. We heard significant concerns about the need for the planning system to protect playing fields. In an open letter in December 2025, Fields in Trust called for "any planning reforms [to] retain a meaningful mechanism to protect playing fields and sports facilities for future generations".[76] In summarising the letter, they said:

> While we support the government's growth agenda and the need for new housing, it must not be at the expense of the spaces that make communities liveable, healthy and cohesive. Permanent legal protection of these spaces has never been so important; we must ensure they are not lost forever.[77]

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74 City AM, Budget risks stifling UK sports stars of tomorrow, industry warns Reeves, 24 November 2025

75 Ukactive, Protect gyms, pools and leisure centres in Budget or risk worsening national health, urges ukactive, 19 November 2025

76 Fields in Trust, Leading sports figures and organisations sign our open letter to save UK's playing fields, 22 December 2025

77 As above

48. Sport England currently has a statutory responsibility in the planning system for the protection of playing field sites as a mandatory consultee. It received around 1200 planning applications per year and told us that, between April 2022 and March 2023, 94% of all concluded planning applications involving playing fields resulted in the protection or improvement of facilities.[78] In March 2025, the Government announced plans for the removal of Sport England's role as statutory consultee on planning applications to "speed up building in [the Government's] growth agenda".[79] All of the consultees referenced in the Government's announcement about potential removal (Sport England, the Theatres Trust and the Gardens Trust) come under the DCMS portfolio.

49. Sport England rejects the Government's assumption that it was the cause of delays. It told us that it protected more than 1,000 playing fields each year, helping to preserve spaces that supported physical activity. It also maintained that it did not slow the planning process, responding to 98% of applications within the statutory 21-day period, and that it avoided unnecessary intervention, raising no objection in around 70% of cases where planning applications affected playing fields.[80] We heard concerns from Football Foundation and ukactive about planning delays affecting the construction of facilities but neither suggested that Sport England was at fault.[81]

50. When we asked the Sports Minister about the potential removal of Sport England as a consultee and whether she had made representations to MHCLG, she said:

> Taking a step back, I do appreciate that the planning system simply is not working and I could share many examples from my own constituents of that. I think the evidence you heard from the Football Foundation is clear. It is far too slow, so I do think there is an issue here. I cannot speak for [the] Bill as a whole, but that is why they are taking the action they are taking.[82]

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78 Sport England (GAM0026)
79 Gov.uk, Bureaucratic burden lifted to speed up building in growth agenda, 10 March 2025
80 Letter from Tim Hollingsworth, Chief Executive, Sport England, regarding oral evidence follow-up, dated 25 June 2025
81 Qq170–171
82 Q260

51. **CONCLUSION**
We are concerned about Sport England losing its function as a Statutory Planning Consultee. Given the vital importance of playing fields to grassroots sport, Ministers in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport should be arguing strongly for the protection of Sport England's role. It is telling that the three bodies the Government is proposing to remove from the consultee list are all accountable to the DCMS.

52. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recommend that the Government retain Sport England as a Statutory Planning Consultee. For its part, Sport England needs to redouble its efforts to turn its responses around swiftly.

53. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recommend that any future planning reforms include a robust and enforceable mechanism to protect playing fields and sports facilities, safeguarding these vital community assets for future generations.

Other spaces

54. Emily Robinson of London Sport told us that due to the "massive disinvestment—in parks, leisure centres, youth services and community centres," London Sport had already started having to look at non-traditional spaces such as "car parks, empty shops and libraries" to facilitate their sporting activities.[83] Encouraging the use of existing spaces—such as community centres, church halls and mosques—for grassroots sport could limit capital expenditure and help ensure adequate funding for programme delivery. Mark Lawrie of StreetGames noted that financial constraints had prompted more innovative approaches. He emphasised that improving nontraditional venues with modest investment could create safe, inclusive spaces for physical activity, reducing the need for costly new leisure facilities and making creative solutions increasingly necessary in the current fiscal climate.[84]

55. London Sport called for the removal of unnecessary "no ball games" signs, arguing that they discouraged play in areas where space was already limited.[85] We heard that Aberdeen City Council had removed such signs during routine maintenance, which reduced costs and made public spaces

83 Q94
84 Q97
85 London Sport (GAM0056)

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more usable.[86] Witnesses at our 'Play' session stressed the importance of safe, nearby spaces for children to play freely. We were told that simple steps, such as play streets, temporary road closures and more welcoming residential environments, could significantly increase children's activity levels.[87]

56. British weather also impacts the ability to be active. The LTA told us that the UK had far fewer covered tennis courts than comparable European nations and said that lightweight canopies offered a fast, lowcost way to expand usable space across tennis, padel and multisport courts.[88]

57. Covered facilities were also raised in relation to cricket. The Government recently announced £1.5 million for two indoor cricket domes,[89] replacing an earlier £35 million commitment by the previous administration to build sixteen domes.[90] The Minister said the earlier pledge had not been funded and described it as a "difficult inheritance", but stressed that the Government still intended to support cricket and was assessing how future investment should be allocated.[91]

58. **CONCLUSION**
We welcome the creative steps organisations have taken to develop innovative approaches to create new spaces and facilities.

59. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recommend that the Government legislate to require local authorities and housing associations to remove unnecessary "No Ball Games" signs, to make public spaces more usable for children's play.

Opening School Facilities fund

60. The previous Government invested £57 million over three years in the Opening School Facilities (OSF) Fund, which supported schools to open their sports facilities to pupils and local communities outside the school day.[92] The programme, delivered by the Youth Sport Trust with StreetGames, ukactive and through the Active Partnerships network, ended in March 2025.

86 Q32, Oral evidence: State of Play: Play, HC 1122, 2 September 2025
87 Q28, Oral evidence: State of Play: Play, HC 1122, 2 September 2025
88 LTA (GAM0080)
89 Letter from Stephanie Peacock MP, Minister for Sport, Media, Civil Society and Youth, regarding Government Funding for Cricket, 25 August 2025
90 Gov.uk, Prime Minister announces multi-million pound boost for grassroots cricket, 5 April 2024
91 Q226
92 Active Partnerships, Opening Schools Facilities (OSF) Fund

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London Sport argued that the programme strengthened relationships between schools and sports organisations, enabled the creation of on-site clubs, and allowed health professionals to deliver activities, like yoga, within schools.[93] We heard that OSF was particularly effective in areas of high deprivation: 71% of the 1,467 participating schools were in the most disadvantaged communities.[94] Emily Robinson, of London Sport, told us she was "devastated" by the Fund's closure. Evidence from the University of Bradford, Bradford Institute for Health Research, and Yorkshire Sport Foundation reported that OSF improved accessibility, reduced geographical and financial barriers to participation, and helped position schools as community hubs.[95] Huw Edwards, Chief Executive of ukactive, told us that withdrawing OSF without a replacement left around 1,500 schools and 180,000 young people without additional opportunities to be active outside school hours.[96]

61. However, not all the evidence supported continuing OSF in its previous form. New College Leicester said that nationally designed, shortterm funding programmes such as OSF often failed to reflect local need and could lead to poor value for money. It argued that such programmes had historically resulted in unsustainable facilities—including "white elephants"—and that some investments, such as artificial pitches, had not accounted for lifecycle costs. It also said that shortterm programmes rarely drove lasting behaviour change.[97]

62. **CONCLUSION**

We heard mixed views about the merits of the Opening School Facilities Fund. We are concerned, however, that the closure of the fund, without a replacement, has left facilities underused despite clear demand from young people.

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93 Active Partnerships National Organisation (GAM0083), Q94
94 London Sport (GAM0056)
95 University of Bradford, Bradford Institute for Health Research, The Yorkshire Sport Foundation (GAM0093)
96 Q172
97 New College Leicester, Learning and Sports Village (GAM0010)

63. **RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend that the Government reinstate support for opening school sports facilities to communities, but that it do so through a long-term, place-based funding model, learning lessons from the experience of the Opening School Facilities Fund. The new programme should be locally informed, include clear sustainability and lifecycle cost requirements, and be aligned with wider community sport and health strategies to ensure lasting impact and value for public money. We look in more detail at the Government's place-based approach in Chapter 4.

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3 Healthy Schools

64. In this Chapter we move from the use of school facilities by members of the public to how they are used in the more traditional sense, by pupils. We consider how PE and daily movement are used, what pupils say they want, and the factors that help or hinder participation; from curriculum time and teacher confidence to kit, changing facilities and the range of activities offered.

School physical activity offering

Two hours of physical education

65. In Chapter 1, we expressed concern about a lack of benchmarking and accountability by Ofsted. The Lawn Tennis Association told us that this absence contributed to PE being seen as "a lower priority" than other subjects.[98] We heard from Sky that the national curriculum still only required state schools in England and Wales to provide one hour of sport or PE a week.[99] Several submissions called on the Government to make two hours of PE a week mandatory.[100]

66. In June 2025, the Government announced "new School Sport Partnerships and a new Enrichment Framework for schools to ensure all young people have equal access to high-quality sport and extracurricular activity". Within this, they committed to "ensure schools have a new framework that will include a clear focus on equal access and two hours per week of physical education" and to make each school's offering publicly available.[101] It is unclear whether or not these two hours will be mandatory.

67. Guidelines issued by the Chief Medical Officers in 2023 said that "children and young people should engage in moderate-to-vigorous-intensity physical activity for an average of at least 60 minutes per day across the week".[102]

98 LTA (GAM0080)
99 Sky (GAM0042)
100 England and Wales Cricket Board (GAM0032), London Youth Games Foundation (GAM0038), Women in Sport (GAM0053), LTA (GAM0080), RFU (GAM0084), Sport and Recreation Alliance (GAM0110)
101 Gov.uk, Prime Minister meets with Lionesses ahead of the Euros to announce a new approach to school sport, 19 June 2025
102 UK CMOs' physical activity guidelines communications framework, 24 March 2023

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This 60 minutes a day does not have to be just in PE at school but "can include all forms of activity such as physical education, active travel, after-school activities, play and sports".[103] Olympian Anna Hopkin told us that early exposure to sport and sports clubs was crucial for establishing lifelong habits and shaping attitudes that carried through into adulthood. Without protected time for PE, many children would have little or no structured introduction to physical activity.[104]

68. Ali Oliver, Chief Executive of the Youth Sport Trust, stressed that activity should be built into the school day, not confined to a single session. She explained that children benefitted most when movement was spread in short bursts throughout the day, with the 60 active minutes achieved through regular moderate-to-vigorous activity rather than a one-off block.[105] She referenced "active breakfast clubs", saying:

> They have a proven evidence base: feed a child a nutritious healthy breakfast and they will learn better; engage a young person in physical activity before they start their school day and they will engage better in their learning.[106]

69. Ali Oliver also cautioned that simply mandating two hours of PE each week would not, on its own, guarantee better outcomes. She highlighted the risk that poorly delivered or non-inclusive lessons, or time lost to changing, could limit the benefit to pupils.[107] She told us that around 30% of children achieved fewer than 30 active minutes a day, and emphasised that the greatest concern was for those who are largely inactive. The consequences for those children were significant, affecting their health, wellbeing, engagement in learning and long-term outcomes.[108]

70. Catherine McKinnell, the then Minister for School Standards, told us that the Government had "made it clear in our manifesto that we want to protect PE time. We have always been very clear about that".[109] In July 2024, the Government announced a review of the National Curriculum and statutory assessment system in England, to ensure they were "fit for purpose and meeting the needs of children and young people".[110] The review, published on

103 As above
104 Q10
105 Q9
106 Q9
107 Q3
108 Q1
109 Q249
110 Gov.uk, Government launches Curriculum and Assessment Review; Curriculum and Assessment Review: Review Aims, Terms of Reference and Working Principles, 19 July 2024

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5 November 2025, made no commitment to increase physical movement. It talked about an enrichment programme which was wide ranging although it was unclear how physical activity would be enhanced as part of that.[111]

PE as a core subject

71. Witnesses called for PE to be a core subject (it is currently listed as a foundation subject),[112] including because it had faced cuts, reduced time and lower status.[113] There has been a significant reduction in the number of PE hours taught on the curriculum, with 41,000 fewer hours taught in PE during 2023/24 compared to 2011/12.[114] According to the Youth Sport Trust, this was despite 85% of parents believing schools should be providing at least 2 hours of PE a week.[115] Ali Oliver told us that

> that has sent a message through the school system that being physically active and physical education are not as important as other subjects, missing the point that physical education is such an amazing access subject for young people to other subjects.[116]

72. We heard too about the wider educational benefits of increased physical activity in schools. Research from Canterbury Christ Church University highlighted in written evidence from Women in Sport, found that 91% of primary pupils and 63% of secondary pupils reported that being active during the school day helped them learn.[117] Dr Rachel Sandford and Dr Oliver Hooper of Loughborough University told us that participation in PE and school sport provided important opportunities for "holistic development, supporting learning across [multiple] domains and affording opportunities to gain valuable skills, connections and experiences that can aid a positive educational trajectory".[118] Meanwhile, Basketball England said that giving PE greater prominence could also help schools meet the needs of children with autism, neurodiversity and other learning differences, by providing regular, high-quality activity rather than relying solely on additional support strategies.[119]

111 Gov.uk, Curriculum and Assessment Review Final Report, 5 November 2025
112 Gov.uk, The National Curriculum; Core subjects are considered essential subjects and are the foundation for learning in schools in England. Foundation subjects, whilst important subjects, are not core subjects. These subjects enrich the educational experience and help develop a wide range of skills for the children.
113 Q3
114 Youth Sport Trust, PE and School Sport, The Annual Report 2024
115 As above
116 Q2
117 Active Recovery Curriculum, Youth Sport Trust, Canterbury Christ Church University, Women in Sport (GAM0053)
118 Dr Rachel Sandford; Dr Oliver Hooper (GAM0107)
119 Q116

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73. **CONCLUSION**
Physical education and daily movement are not being fully utilised in schools, leaving too many children, particularly the least active, without the health, wellbeing and learning benefits that regular activity provides. Curriculum time for PE has declined, its non-core status has reduced its perceived value, and inequalities in participation have widened as a result. Increasing timetabled PE is important, but meaningful change depends on embedding movement throughout the whole school day. Making PE a core subject would raise its status and help ensure that physical activity is integrated across teaching and learning, rather than squeezed from the timetable.

74. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recommend that the Government strengthen the national curriculum by confirming that as part of the new approach to school sport announced in June 2025, a minimum of two hours of high-quality PE each week will be mandatory.

75. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recommend that the Government require schools to have a policy to give every child the opportunity to achieve at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day. We further recommend that the Government set clear expectations for activity to be woven into the school day, through short movement breaks, active travel, and wrap-around provision.

76. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recommend that the Government make physical education a core subject within the national curriculum.

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Delivering healthy schools

Teacher training

77. Fitmedia, a specialist fitness company which provides health and fitness assessment systems for children, told us that "the single most powerful factor" in determining engagement was the quality of PE teaching.[120] Many submissions highlighted the lack of sufficient teacher training in PE and physical activity, particularly at primary school. The Premier League said that teachers received "negligible training"[121] whilst Activity Alliance told us

120 Fitmedia (GAM0046)
121 The Premier League (GAM0108)

that primary teacher initial education did "not sufficiently prepare primary school teachers to teach PE with teachers often lacking confidence and understanding of the subject", leading to negative experiences for pupils, particularly those with SEND.[122]

78. We heard that the use of external coaching companies to deliver PE and school sport was increasing. An estimated 80% of primary schools now use part of their PE and Sport Premium (see also Chapter 1) to hire external coaches.[123] The Rugby Football League raised concerns that many coaches lacked the training, insight and understanding of individual pupils required to deliver highquality, inclusive PE.[124] Stephanie Hilborne, Chief Executive of Women in Sport, told us that external coaches were often "young blokes who love sport" rather than professional educationalists, and stressed the importance of ensuring that those teaching PE understood the different needs of children and the particular impacts of puberty on girls' participation and confidence.[125]

79. **CONCLUSION**
Embedding physical activity throughout the school week to improve children's health, wellbeing, and educational attainment ultimately depends on the expertise of the nation's teachers. While we welcome schools working with local clubs and organisations, it remains essential that qualified teachers play a central role, as they understand the diverse needs of every child in the class—not just the rules or techniques of a particular sport. Investing in better-trained teachers is essential to improving children's lifelong relationship with physical activity.

80. **RECOMMENDATION**
The Government should publish a plan to strengthen initial teacher training in physical education and physical activity and ongoing professional development for all teachers, particularly at primary level.

PE kit

81. We heard that the PE kit itself could also be a barrier to engagement in sport at school. Research from Sport England's This Girl Can campaign showed a stark contrast in attitudes towards PE: boys were more likely to describe it as "exciting" or "engaging", whereas girls were more likely to

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122 Activity Alliance (GAM0035)
123 Fitmedia (GAM0046)
124 Rugby Football League (GAM0090)
125 Women in Sport (GAM0053), Q85

view it as "embarrassing" or "stressful".[126] Inclusive Sportswear told us that school PE kit was "a significant barrier for girls' long-term participation in sport and physical activity due to lack of choice and comfort, and mandatory over-sexualised uniforms causing high drop-out rates".[127] It called for a change to the Non-Statutory School Uniform Guidance[128] to ensure that PE kit was "inclusive and flexible".[129]

82. Women in Sport raised concerns about the lack of encouragement for girls to wear sports bras. Stephanie Hilborne told us that only 13% of schools had sports bras on the kit list.[130] In March 2024, the previous Women and Equalities Committee recommended that the Department for Education and the National Physical Activity Taskforce review PE kit guidance to ensure girls had the widest possible choice, including clear advice on the use of sports bras.[131]

83. Research commissioned by Sky showed that 47% of 11–18 year-old girls did not feel comfortable when getting changed for PE, compared to 22% of boys. The Sweaty Betty Foundation found that 43% of girls saw the lack of privacy in changing rooms as a significant barrier and that one in three had missed PE lessons because of it.[132] Sky also found that 15% of 11–18 year olds had skipped school for the day to avoid PE. They estimated that this meant that adolescent girls currently at school had missed 2 million hours of teaching time in order to get out of sports lessons.[133]

84. Some schools have addressed these barriers by allowing pupils to attend school in their PE kit on days they have lessons. This approach emerged during the pandemic and has been retained in some schools because it reduces anxiety and frees up lesson time. Stephanie Hilborne told us that enabling girls to arrive already dressed for sport had been "massively effective" in increasing participation.[134]

85. We also heard proposals for more practical uniform policies in our evidence session on 'Play'. Nicola Noble, Associate Headteacher at Surrey Square Primary School, suggested making trainers part of the everyday uniform to support active play and ensure children could move freely throughout the

126 This Girl Can; PE: still sitting on the sidelines
127 Inclusive Sportswear (GAM0078)
128 Gov.uk, Developing school uniform policy, Updated 29 April 2024
129 Inclusive Sportswear (GAM0078)
130 Q85
131 Women and Equalities Committee Report, 'Health barriers for girls and women in sport,' published 5 March 2024
132 Sweaty Betty Foundation, Change starts in the Changing Room
133 Sky/Public First, Game Changing: How sport gives every girl a better chance, 11 September 2025
134 Q85

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day. She argued that expecting families to buy multiple types of footwear was unnecessary and that practical uniform reduced barriers to activity and supported better engagement in the classroom.[135]

86. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recommend that the Government issue guidance making clear that schools are expected to adopt PE kit and uniform policies that prioritise comfort, inclusivity and dignity—particularly for girls and pupils with protected characteristics. Schools should work directly with students to provide flexible clothing options, including guidance on sports bras, and take practical steps such as improving privacy in changing areas to reduce anxiety and encourage sustained participation in PE. The Government should also promote more practical, activity-friendly school uniforms, such as allowing sportswear or trainers as standard, to ensure pupils can move comfortably throughout the day. These measures would help reduce barriers to activity, lower costs for families and increase participation, particularly among girls.

Encouraging a fun and inclusive environment

87. The Association for Physical Education defines PE as exposure to a "broad range of activities, including sport and dance", reinforcing the need for a diverse and engaging offer.[136] Academics who submitted evidence to us identified that the current curriculum favoured children who were already technically proficient and often resulted in negative experiences for children who were not technically proficient or particularly 'sporty'. This caused them to distance themselves from sport and PE. Academics suggested a wider range of activities within the curriculum and a move away from traditional sport to also include more non-traditional sports, such as 'wheel-based sports' (e.g. scooters, skateboards, roller skates and bicycles).[137] The Oak National Academy has begun to expand its PE curriculum resources to include non-traditional activities such as parkour, pickleball and korfball, with Government support, to help teachers feel more confident delivering a wider offer.[138]

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135 Q35, Oral evidence: State of Play: Play, HC 1122, 2 September 2025
136 The association of Physical education, Definitions of Physical Education, School Sport & Physical Activity, 17 May 2019
137 Dr Darren Nolan (Senior Lecturer in Sport Coaching at University of Hertfordshire) (GAM0003); Dr Kristy Howells (Reader in Children's Health, Sport Pedagogy and Physical Education at Canterbury Christ Church University) (GAM0012)
138 Oak National Academy

88. 2024 data from Youth Sports Trust's Girls Active programme showed a strong demand for dance, particularly among girls and pupils with SEND.[139] However, Ofsted's 'Levelling the Playing Field' report found that dance and outdoor adventurous activities were systematically less well-supported and delivered, and in some cases, not delivered at all, despite being a curriculum entitlement as the joint most popular choice.[140]

89. SportCheer England told us that cheerleading was "unique in capturing and retaining participation from girls and young women at an age when they are traditionally dropping out of sport".[141] Paige Cronje, Board Director at SportCheer England, told us that in one school they worked with [Radcliffe school in Milton Keynes] cheerleading has become "the largest afterschool club the school has, which is very surprising considering that it has a variety of traditional sports".[142] The Sport and Recreation Alliance cited research showing that movement and dance are "particularly effective in engaging and retaining girls, young women and older people."[143] Despite this, funding constraints mean that activities proven to buck the trend of the high dropoff rate among girls are not being maximised. As the then Chief Executive of Sport England, Tim Hollingsworth acknowledged, it is, "limited in the extent to which we [Sport England] can fund across absolutely every aspect".[144] Sport England highlighted work to broaden the offer through initiatives such as its 'Studio' platform, which provides accessible options like dance and Zumba alongside more traditional sports.[145] When asked which sports they wished their school offered, 35% of children in our survey (see the Annex) selected boxing as their top choice, followed by swimming at 33%.

90. Witnesses emphasised the importance of activities that attracted pupils who might not engage with mainstream team sports. Women in Sport told us that while increased opportunities in sports such as football were welcome, the growth often involved girls who were already active.[146] Ali Oliver, of the Youth Sport Trust, noted rising interest in sports such as dodgeball in schools, arguing that pupils responded positively when activities began with a level playing field and no one has a prior advantage.[147] Bowls England reported that of the 6,000 pupils participating in schoolbased bowls since 2023, a significant proportion were from ethnically diverse backgrounds or had SEND, demonstrating

139 One Dance UK (GAM0095)
140 Ofsted, Levelling the playing field: the physical education subject report, 20 September 2023
141 SportCheer England (GAM0113)
142 Q111
143 Sport and Recreation Alliance (GAM0110)
144 Q199
145 Q198
146 Q89
147 Q22

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that lowerintensity or unfamiliar activities could engage pupils who might not connect with conventional school sport.[148] Sport England stressed that positive early experiences and the development of physical literacy in primary school were central to sustaining participation as children move through the system.[149]

91. London Sport cautioned that an overemphasis on competition could reinforce negative experiences for some pupils and contribute to a "fear of failure", although it did say that "competition does have a role to play".[150] Olympic swimmer Anna Hopkin highlighted the value of competition when delivered in a supportive environment. She told us that shielding children entirely from competitive experiences could prevent them from learning how to manage both success and disappointment and argued that welldesigned competition could build resilience and provide opportunities for children who might otherwise miss out on experiencing success.[151]

92. **CONCLUSION**
Evidence shows that a narrow, traditional PE curriculum often alienates pupils who feel less confident or "sporty", particularly girls and children with SEND. Broadening the offer to include non-traditional sports, dance and outdoor activities helps make PE more enjoyable and accessible, supporting physical literacy and long-term engagement.

93. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recommend that the Government require and support schools to deliver a broader and more inclusive PE curriculum that prioritises enjoyment, comfort and a welcoming environment for all pupils. Alongside a wider range of activities, we recommend that schools should offer supportive, age-appropriate competition that helps children learn from both success and failure without making excellence the sole focus. High achievers should be encouraged to reach their potential, but schools should place equal value on progress from inactivity to participation, recognising this as a significant success in its own right.

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148 Q143
149 Q198
150 London Sport (GAM0056)
151 Q50

Relationships between schools and the community

94. A consistent theme across our evidence was the need for stronger, more reliable connections between schools and community clubs. Lisa Wainwright, Chief Executive of the Sport and Recreation Alliance, emphasised that teachers focussed on teaching and volunteers on delivering activity, but that no one was responsible for coordinating the space between them.[152] Youth Sport Trust,[153] the LTA[154] and Platform Cricket[155] called for an equivalent national structure to the old School Sport Partnership (SSP) programme, for which funding ended in 2011. Platform Cricket described the withdrawal of SSP funding as a significant setback to achieving the sporting legacy expected after the 2012 Olympic Games.[156] However, the Cricket Club Development Network told us that while the original model should not be recreated, the learning from what worked should inform any new approach.[157]

95. We also heard that funding and capacity continued to constrain partnership working. The Local Government Association told us that council sport development functions, previously central to reaching the least active and coordinating with schools, had diminished significantly since 2010 due to budget pressures, leaving a key part of the system weakened.[158] Paige Cronje from SportCheer England said that providing modest support for organisations to broker school–club links would rapidly increase participation, noting that both clubs and schools were willing but lacked the practical means to connect.[159] She went on to give an example of how different sports can work together to facilitate more opportunities for young people:

> If you think about cheerleading, we could actually partner very easily with basketball; Stewart [Kellett - Basketball England] talked about the breaks in basketball,[160] so we could very much host shared activities. However, until we have the funding and organisations to facilitate that, it is very difficult to do.[161]

152 Q75
153 Youth Sport Trust (GAM0033)
154 LTA (GAM0080)
155 Platform Cricket (GAM0073)
156 Platform Cricket (GAM0073)
157 Cricket Club Development Network (GAM0086)
158 Local Government Association (GAM0074)
159 Q117
160 Q108
161 Q118

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96. Following the ending of the funding for the SSP, the School Games Organisers (SGOs) network was launched in the 2011–2012 academic year. A national network of professionals who support schools to deliver the UK's School Games programme, SGOs were a government initiative funded by Sport England and the National Lottery to get young people active and healthy aimed at providing a national network of professionals who support schools to deliver the UK's School Games programme.[162] SGOs coordinate inclusive competitions, promote leadership opportunities, and help schools foster physical literacy and positive attitudes towards sport. In September 2025, Sport England, following confirmation from the Government, announced funding for the School Games Organiser Network had been extended to 31 July 2026.[163]

97. A report published in July 2025 was very positive about the effectiveness and success of School Games Organisers (SGOs). The independent evaluation of SGO Network, funded by Sport England, said that the findings:

> clearly demonstrate the significant contribution SGOs deliver across the five School Games Outcomes and beyond, with 88% of surveyed schools stating that their sport and physical activity provision would decline without the support of their SGO. [It showed t]he cost benefit analysis of the SGO Network was also compelling, with a benefit cost ratio of 2.48 for secondary school-aged children and 1.54 for children in Years 3 to 6 (ages 7 to 11)[…] School survey responses indicated that 93% of schools believe their SGO has a positive impact on their least active pupils.[164]

98. Despite the positive assessment, we heard from Scott Lloyd, Chief Executive, of the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) that the SGO structure or the old school sport partnership model were "too inconsistent across the country".[165] In written evidence, the LTA said:

> Greater co-ordination of extracurricular opportunities and links between schools and wider community provision is needed, however. Existing School Games Organisers play an important role in the current infrastructure, but their capacity is limited.[166]

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162 Sport England, The School Games Organiser Network review, 4 July 2025
163 Youth Sport Trust, Government confirms funding for the School Games Organisers network for 2025/26, September 2025
164 Sport England, School Games Organiser Network Review, 4 July 2025
165 Q115
166 LTA (GAM0080)

99. Meanwhile, Ali Oliver, of the Youth Sport Trust, told us that an expansion of the SGO network would be cost effective:

> At the moment, we spend £11 million on the school games organisers three days a week to serve 50 to 60 schools each. You don't need to spend a lot of the £320 million [the amount PE and sport premium funding schools will receive for the academic year 2025 to 2026[167]] to boost that network, to give it the right level of capacity and capability but leave money in the hands of primary schools.[168]

100. When we asked Stephanie Peacock, the Minister for Sport, about the SGOs, she said that she absolutely recognised "the value of the network" and acknowledged its importance "in the context of the work we talk about, bringing the two Departments [DCMS and Education] together".[169] In June 2025, the Government announced "new School Sport Partnerships and a new Enrichment Framework for schools to ensure all young people have equal access to highquality sport and extracurricular activity".[170] We await further details on how this will operate in practice and how it will compare to previous initiatives.

101. **RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend the Government build on the success of the School Games Organiser network with its new School Sport Partnership by increasing capacity and ensuring consistent national coverage. We invite the Government in responding to our report to set out how the scheme will work in practice, how it will build on lessons from the School Games Organiser scheme, how much funding will go into it, and what mechanisms will be in place to ensure this funding is effectively distributed.

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167 Gov.uk, How much PE and sport premium funding schools will receive for the academic year 2025 to 2026, 6 October 2025

168 Q15

169 Q257

170 Gov.uk, Prime Minister meets with Lionesses ahead of the Euros to announce a new approach to school sport, 19 June 2025

4 Healthy Communities

Creating healthy communities

102. We now move beyond the classroom to how communities engage in sport and physical activity. This chapter examines different ways in which sport can bring communities together promoting cohesion and broadening the popularity of sport amongst groups that are not currently engaged or connected.

Social cohesion

103. Many organisations told us of the importance of sport and movement in improving social cohesion.[171] Football Foundation told us that football facilities drove physical activity, created community cohesion and could attract underrepresented groups.[172] Platform Cricket highlighted the role sport could play in integration and confidencebuilding in areas with limited green space and high levels of ethnic and religious diversity. It described working in densely populated boroughs where many families were new to the UK and where cricket had helped create a sense of belonging.[173] Other sports were cited for their ability to connect generations. Bowls England noted that bowls offers opportunities for grandparents and grandchildren to participate together, increasingly valuable given changing childcare structures with two parents working full-time.[174] We heard that bowls was one activity that can foster strong social connection and reduce loneliness, as well as supporting physical health. Jon Cockcroft of Bowls England told us about the 'Bowl for Health' scheme, "an eight-week programme where individuals with chronic illnesses can do an hour of bowls a week and then socialise with their fellow bowlers at the end." He told us that of the 600 people who had been through the programme, about 80% had said it was a really positive experience and just over 70% had been retained in the sport.[175]

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171 LTA (GAM0080), Active Essex (GAM0034), One Dance UK (GAM0095), Angling Trust (GAM0094)
172 Q168
173 Platform Cricket (GAM0073)
174 Q144
175 Q134

104. In addition to bowls, padel was highlighted by the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) as a sport that was easy to learn, highly sociable, and specifically effective at retaining older participants whose mobility might be declining, enabling them to "stay in tennis for longer" and attracting lapsed players back into regular activity.[176] Meanwhile, we also heard evidence supporting adapted, slowerpaced formats, such as walking tennis or football, which demonstrate that modified versions of mainstream sports can maintain participation among those with reduced mobility.[177] Entain told us in written evidence that:

> Walking football has been shown to help tackle social isolation in people aged 50 and over through shared group experiences and the social connection developed in playing football.[178]

105. In our session on 'Play', we also heard about Play Streets: temporary, residentled road closures that created safe, childfriendly spaces right outside people's homes. Ingrid Skeels, cofounder of 'Playing Out', told us that even small pockets of safe space could spark not only higher levels of physical activity but also a powerful sense of neighbourliness. She described how Play Streets brought residents together, helping them form supportive local networks and strengthening community ties. These connections had proved invaluable during the pandemic, demonstrating how a simple, lowcost initiative could nurture lasting relationships and active citizenship within a community.[179]

106. The Government agreed in their evidence that "community sport can play a major role in building confidence, team-work, supporting life skills for future generations and improving community cohesion".[180] Its Youth Strategy, published in December 2025, said that today's youth were the "most connected generation–but also one of the loneliest" and highlighted that one in five respondents to a youth survey didn't have a trusted adult in their life outside of home. The Government stated that one of its main visions was to make sure that all young people felt part of the community they lived in.[181]

107. Women in Sport highlighted the impact of the Big Sister programme, which supported girls aged 9–15 in disadvantaged communities to feel "sport ready".[182] The initiative provides free or reduced-cost access to leisure facilities, female-only sessions, trained female leaders and free period products, and ensures leisure centre staff understand the specific needs of

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176 Q112
177 LTA (GAM0080)
178 Entain (GAM0064)
179 Q28, Oral evidence: State of Play: Play, HC 1122, 2 September 2025
180 UK Government (GAM0105)
181 DCMS, Your National Youth Strategy, 10 December 2025
182 Places Leisure, Big Sister Project

teenage girls. Staff also go into schools and local communities to promote the offer directly. Stephanie Hilborne, from Women in Sport, told us that this model had been "hugely impactful", increasing girls' confidence and participation, and had since been adopted across more than 100 leisure centres. However, she also noted that scaling it without Government support would be challenging.[183]

108. **CONCLUSION**
Joining a sports club, community walking club or a leisure centre is a wonderful way to meet new people in the community and to make connections. When local people come together through sport and physical activity, further benefits follow, from increased spending in nearby businesses to improved understanding between communities who might not otherwise meet.

109. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recommend that the Government should provide national funding and guidance to enable local authorities, clubs and community organisations to expand inclusive initiatives, (such as Play Streets, walking sports and evidence-backed programmes like Big Sister), prioritising those that engage older generations, disadvantaged groups and young people with limited support networks.

Place-based funding

110. We received evidence warning that some communities were being left behind, particularly socalled 'doubly disadvantaged' neighbourhoods that experience both high material deprivation and limited social assets or connectivity.[184] Research from OCSI (Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion) showed that these areas had historically received significantly lower levels of Sport England funding than other deprived areas and England as a whole, securing just £19.24 in charitable grant funding per head between 2004 and October 2023, compared with £68.21 across other deprived areas and £38.02 nationally.[185] StreetGames told us that children and young people in the most disadvantaged communities faced the greatest barriers to safe, affordable activity,[186] while Basketball England similarly argued that, in a constrained financial climate, investment should be prioritised where it will have the greatest impact.[187]

183 Q90
184 Centre for progressive policy, 17 Oct 2024
185 Local Trust (GAM0051)
186 StreetGames (GAM0029)
187 Q125

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111. In its written evidence, the Government noted that inactivity was disproportionately higher among certain groups:

> In England, 12 million adults are inactive and over one-third of children do less than 30 minutes of activity a day. The data shows us that this varies by geography, ethnicity and socio-economic background. Put simply, too many people are inactive, and it is disproportionately higher among certain demographics.[188]

112. According to NHS England the greatest health and economic gains can be made by supporting those who are physically inactive to participate in some physical activity.[189] The Richmond Group of Charities said that this was the case for people with long-term disability, telling us that "encouraging light activity … would make a significant economic contribution and chimes with many of the ways to move that are most achievable and realistic for those currently inactive".[190] The Dan Maskell Tennis Trust, a charity which supports tennis for disabled people, stated that:

> Sport addresses areas of concern which the Government are already mindful of such as mental health and obesity plus other conditions which can be caused by inactive lifestyles and poor diet such as diabetes which is why funding for sport is so important.[191]

113. Other evidence reinforced the need for approaches tailored to the specific characteristics of different places. Robert Sullivan, Chief Executive of the Football Foundation, emphasised that investing time at the outset in community engagement and understanding local needs helped bring together diverse groups within communities and ensures better value from investment.[192] Andy Taylor, Chief Executive of Active Partnerships, cited an example from Bradford where the term "sport" itself could deter some young Asian girls from participating in school-based activity. He explained that tailored environments, such as girls-only settings that built confidence, enabled participants to progress into wider sporting activity and benefit from its broader social outcomes.[193] Tim Hollingsworth, the then Chief Executive of Sport England, highlighted the JU:MP programme, which had engaged 30,000 families, mainly from Asian backgrounds, in Bradford, leading up to 70 more minutes of activity per week for young people.[194]

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188 UK Government (GAM0105)
189 NHS England, Harnessing the benefits of physical activity
190 The Richmond Group of Charities (GAM0043)
191 The Dan Maskell Tennis Trust (GAM0011)
192 Q186
193 Q71
194 Q197

114. Sport England's new place-based approach recognises that while inactivity and inequality are present across the country, "they are deeper in some areas".[195] Explaining the approach, Tim Holingsworth, the then Chief Executive of Sport England, told us that:

> The fundamental shift in our resource is to place-based investment, with £250 million over five years going primarily to up to 90 places in England that we know have some of the highest areas of deprivation and inequality and, as a consequence, the highest levels of inactivity.[196]

115. The approach is delivered through listening to local communities and developing long-term partnerships with local organisations, councils, schools, the NHS, charities and other stakeholders.[197] The Government was keen to highlight its support for this new place-based funding structure, saying that there was "good evidence" that it can outperform previous efforts.[198]

116. **CONCLUSION**
We support a place-based approach to ensure that community needs are understood and met in order to achieve the largest increase in activity levels. Every community is different, and by tailoring initiatives to the particular characteristics of an area, the Government and Sport England can greatly increase their chances of success.

117. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recommend that the Government review the impact of the place-based funding model annually, publishing metrics to ensure that 'doubly-disadvantaged' neighbourhoods are being fully included in the process.

Visibility of women's football

118. Women in Sport argued that broadcast visibility, especially on free to air channels, had a role to play in inspiring girls to engage with sport.[199] Our predecessor Committee, who were looking at women's sport but were unable to report due to the 2024 General Election, took evidence on the possibility of having women's football shown in a regular Saturday 3pm slot.

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195 Sport England (GAM0026)
196 Q196
197 Sport England, Our work in places
198 Q245
199 Women in Sport (GAM0053)

Under the provision of Article 48 of UEFA's statutes, the FA currently prevents live football being televised between 2.45pm and 5.15pm on Saturdays in an attempt to protect stadium attendances.[200]

119. The suggestion that women's football should be shown at 3pm on a Saturday was made in the Carney review, an independent report intended to examine the opportunities and challenges for the women's and girls' game, published in 2023.[201] Karen Carney MBE, a former England and Great Britain footballer, argued that achieving a dedicated exclusive broadcast slot for women's football would provide consistent and exclusive coverage for the game, elevating visibility and increasing fan engagement.

120. The Football Association were open to the idea of opening that slot for women's football and told our predecessors that:

> The women's game needs a regular broadcast slot at weekends which doesn't go up against the men's game. Again, better collaboration is needed with the men's calendar to provide a space reserved for women's football. We appreciate that it is a crowded market, but this could be done by making the women's game exempt from UEFA Article 48, enabling the BWSL to have a regular TV slot at 3pm every Saturday.[202]

121. **CONCLUSION**

Increasing women's participation in sport depends not only on opportunities to play, but also on visibility and representation. Evidence shows that when women's sport is regularly broadcast, especially on free-to-air TV, girls are more likely to feel inspired and motivated to be active. A dedicated broadcast slot for women's football would provide consistent coverage, grow audiences and challenge persistent gender stereotypes.

122. **RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend that the Government intervene in discussions between the Premier League, Women's Professional Leagues Limited, English Football League and Football Association to ensure that women's football is exempt from the restrictions on broadcasting in the 3pm on Saturday slot.

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200 UEFA, Blocked broadcasting hours defined
201 Gov.uk, Raising the bar - reframing the opportunity in women's football, 2023
202 FA (WOM0041)

Community Health

Social prescribing

123. Social prescribing connects people with activities, groups, and community services that support their practical, social, and emotional wellbeing.[203] England was the first country to integrate social prescribing into national health policy through the 2019 NHS Long Term Plan,[204] yet witnesses told us there was still more to do. We heard that the Government needed to better recognise the crucial role sport could play in meeting its health and wider policy objectives. Women in Sport noted that sport was often overlooked in national policy discussions representing a missed opportunity given its clear physical and mental health benefits.[205] The Premier League highlighted that while social prescribing was "having a positive impact in some local areas", this progress was largely driven by strong local relationships rather than by a coherent national strategy.[206]

124. We heard evidence that more use of gyms and leisure centres could help address two of the leading causes of long-term sickness in the UK: musculoskeletal conditions and poor mental health.[207] Huw Edwards, Chief Executive of ukactive, said gyms and leisure centres could play a substantial role in tackling health issues that carry high economic costs, and that scaling this approach "could happen in this Parliament".[208] Sported's October 2023 Pulse Survey found that 65% of grassroots organisations wanted Government to deliver health initiatives through community-based groups.[209]

125. Tim Hollingsworth, of Sport England, was positive about the case for better social prescribing provision, describing it as a "great opportunity" and saying:

> we are not going to move the dial on people's health and wellbeing unless we have a more preventative health agenda that builds sport and physical activity into our daily lives.[...]The answer must be a much more effective join-up in how we see the opportunity for people in our sector to be contributors to public health. We know from our

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203 NHS England, Social Prescribing, 2025
204 NHS, The 10 Year Health Plan for England, 2019
205 Women in Sport (GAM0053)
206 Sport and Recreation Alliance (GAM0110)
207 Q171
208 As above
209 Sported (GAM0025)

insight into the social value of sport that we prevent 3.2 million cases of disease every year because of people being active, and we have 27% fewer sick days.[210]

126. The Government told us in written evidence that sport and physical activity had an important role to play in delivering the Government's Missions on Health and Opportunity and that Health Mission and Opportunity Mission boards were bringing Departments together to ensure that action is taken around preventative health.[211]

Mental health

127. The UK Chief Medical Officers in 2019 stated that "if physical activity were a drug, we would refer to it as a miracle cure, due to the great many illnesses it can prevent and help treat".[212] The Youth Sport Trust highlighted the proven positive mental health benefits of participation in sport and physical activity.[213] Get Set 4 Tennis, an inclusive community tennis club, emphasised that participating in community sports could significantly reduce stress, anxiety, and depression.[214]

128. Well Run Brum flagged that "in a survey of 2,000 men living in the UK, commissioned by 'Better',[215] 96% of men agreed that participating in sports and exercising positively benefitted their mental health".[216] However, despite the evidence, Women in Sport told us that sport was still under-utilised as a tool.[217] Sport England said that movement, physical activity and sport was not as well recognised as it should be in the health systems - both preventative and treatment pathways - as a diversionary tool.[218]

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210 Qq194 + 201
211 UK Government (GAM0105)
212 Gov.uk, UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines, 7 September 2019
213 Youth Sport Trust (GAM0033)
214 Get Set 4 Tennis CIC (GAM0014)
215 Better, Men's Mental Health, Social Media Pressures, and the Power of Exercise, 2023
216 Richard Loftus (Founder at Well Run Brum) (GAM0075)
217 Women in Sport (GAM0053)
218 Sport England (GAM0026)

129. **CONCLUSION**
Sport and physical activity remain underrecognised within national health policy, despite strong evidence of their value for prevention, wellbeing and the management of longterm conditions, and despite the Government's stated support. While England is regarded as a leader in social prescribing, provision remains inconsistent and lacks an overarching strategy. Gyms, leisure centres and community groups already play a substantial role—supporting musculoskeletal health, improving mental wellbeing and accommodating NHS referrals—but their potential is far from fully realised. Physical activity consistently delivers major physical and mental health benefits, yet it is still not fully embedded within health policy or treatment pathways. Given its proven ability to reduce illness, improve wellbeing and ease pressure on the NHS, the Government should integrate sport and physical activity more firmly into preventative health, mental health support and social prescribing.

130. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recommend that the Government provide clearer national guidance and sustained funding to health, sport and local partners so that proven models can expand and more people, especially those with long-term conditions, poor mental health or at risk of inactivity, can benefit from accessible, community-based activity as part of their overall health and wellbeing support. The guidance should cover how activities like bowls and walking sports can be signposted via social prescribing.

Volunteering

131. Tim Hollingsworth told us that the role of volunteers should be more widely valued, noting the "dual benefit" of volunteering: improving wellbeing for volunteers themselves while also strengthening local communities. He said there should be a "national conversation" about how volunteering could be recognised, including through clearer pathways to qualifications and employment.[219]

132. The Sport for Development Coalition highlighted the scale of the contribution volunteers make. It reported that a more diverse and confident volunteer workforce would help more people access opportunities, and pointed to Sport England's social value research estimating that weekly volunteering generated an average value of £2,100 per adult.[220] However, it identified persistent barriers to recruitment and retention, including

219 Q214
220 Sport England, The social value of sport and physical activity in England, October 2024

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time pressures, lack of recognition, and unclear or administrativeheavy roles. It recommended offering more inclusive volunteering opportunities, providing incentives such as training and free memberships, and expanding partnerships with employers and education providers to support volunteer leave. Furthermore, it stressed the need to improve support for disabled volunteers and to use digital tools and flexible scheduling to reduce the burden on volunteers.[221]

133. We also received evidence on the uneven distribution of volunteering. London Sport told us that people from higher socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to volunteer, often because they faced fewer barriers to taking part in sport or came from families with a tradition of volunteering.[222] Tim Hollingsworth said that it was "genuinely becoming harder to give up your time for free".[223] North Yorkshire Sport added that many people were reluctant to volunteer because they feared longterm commitments, and argued that casual, flexible volunteering routes should be encouraged.[224]

134. Several witnesses, including the LTA[225] and the Sport and Recreation Alliance,[226] discussed the importance of recognising volunteers' contributions. London Youth said that awards or other forms of public acknowledgement at community events would support longterm engagement.[227] Sarah Kaye, Chief Executive of Sported, told us that volunteering, particularly for young people, could be as valuable as formal work experience but was not recognised in the same way. She argued that Government could play a greater role in promoting the career and personal development benefits of volunteering and in supporting accredited pathways. She said investing in community programmes could have a "double benefit": improving outcomes for young people while inspiring more of them to volunteer.[228]

The administrative burden

135. We heard repeatedly that rising administrative and compliance demands were putting significant pressure on volunteers. The Sport and Recreation Alliance reported that volunteer administration time had increased by 25% for only a 3% rise in delivery, illustrating the strain created by growing regulatory requirements.[229] Jon Cockcroft, Chief Executive of Bowls England,

221 Sport for Development Coalition (GAM0057)
222 London Sport (GAM0056); Sport England, Lifestyle of Volunteering in Sport, 2019
223 Q210
224 North Yorkshire Sport (GAM0005)
225 LTA (GAM0080)
226 Sport and Recreation Alliance (GAM0110)
227 London Youth (GAM0027)
228 Q68
229 Sport and Recreation Alliance (GAM0110)

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said some volunteers now "work harder... running their local bowls club than they did when they were working".[230] He stressed that the Government needed to consider the impact of legislative and regulatory changes, with challenges including data protection, digital services, safeguarding, and increasingly complex disciplinary processes. These pressures meant volunteers were spending more time on formal compliance and less time developing their sport.[231]

136. Sport England told us that it was working to reduce these burdens while maintaining appropriate safeguards. It was developing a professional coaching register to allow coaches to move between sports more easily without duplicating qualifications. It also said that volunteers who had completed safeguarding training and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks in one club should not be required to repeat the entire process when supporting another.[232]

137. **CONCLUSION**

Volunteers are essential to the delivery of community sport. Across the country, thousands of people give their time to coach, officiate and support grassroots clubs, often sustaining provision that would not otherwise exist. We want everyone to have the chance to volunteer. A greater mix of volunteers should improve community relationships and lead to a more diverse volunteering network which in turn will provide role models to those currently less inclined to attend clubs and groups. A coherent policy framework for volunteering would help strengthen the volunteer workforce and ensure that community sport is better supported and more sustainable.

138. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Government should publish a comprehensive volunteering policy for sport and physical activity. This should include linking volunteering to career development and skills pathways; establishing national awards or recognition schemes for volunteers in community sport; expanding flexible and inclusive volunteering opportunities; and improving digital tools to support recruitment, retention and coordination of volunteers.

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230 Q151
231 Q152
232 Q212

139. **CONCLUSION**
We recognise the importance of providing safe environments for everyone attending sports clubs or activity groups and would not want to advocate for anything that would compromise this. However, we call on the Government to be mindful of the added burden on volunteers that legislative changes can cause.

140. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recommend that the Government work with Sport England to identify steps that can be taken to streamline volunteer administration. This might include establishing a central register so that qualifications and DBS checks can be carried between sports and activity groups.

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5 Conclusion: The Case for a Strategy

Evidence for a single strategy

141. The preceding chapters have demonstrated that the challenges facing community and school sport do not exist in isolation but form part of a wider, interconnected system that is currently failing to reach its potential.

142. We heard consistent evidence that a single, cross-government strategy was required to align funding, planning, education, transport and health around a shared objective to get the nation more active. ukactive emphasised that physical activity needed to be treated as a societal tool, not solely as "sport", because the largest gains sit in health prevention, mental wellbeing, productivity and social cohesion.[233] Ali Oliver, Chief Executive of the Youth Sport Trust, cautioned that the proliferation of separate "youth", "PE [and] school sport" and "play" initiatives risked disconnection and missed opportunities, instead of a coherent plan for healthy, happy and successful young people.[234] Sport England's then Chief Executive, Tim Hollingsworth, supported the need for a clear, cross-governmental strategic vision,[235] noting that "no one organisation, Department or sector can do it alone".[236] ukactive also argued for a wholesystem approach and stronger alignment across departments:

> The Government must foster a deeper recognition of the immense potential of physical activity across Whitehall, ensuring that it is connected explicitly to the delivery of key cross-government missions such as health, economic growth, and barriers to opportunity. Physical activity cannot be properly leveraged if it is viewed solely as sport or confined to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).[237]

143. The Sport and Recreation Alliance told us that what was required was "an ambitious, cross-government approach built on a commitment to working in partnership with the sector and to using all available policy levers to unlock

233 ukactive (GAM0062)
234 Q47
235 Q194
236 Sport England (GAM0026)
237 ukactive (GAM0062)

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its full potential".[238] Women in Sport said that one area where the lack of cross-governmental working was "most apparent" was health, where "despite significant discussion of prevention", sport was "still peripheral".[239]

144. In 2023, the previous Government published a policy paper called 'Get Active', in which it set targets to have 2.5 million more adults and 1 million more children classed as active in England by 2030, and established a National Physical Activity Taskforce (NPAT) to support cross-departmental working.[240] The Taskforce has since closed. In an answer to a written question on 25 March 2025, the Minister for Sport, Stephanie Peacock MP, said "the NPAT last met on Wednesday 25 March 2024 and we have no plans to reconvene that group".[241] The current Government has not yet introduced a sports strategy.

145. Stephanie Peacock stated that the Government's priorities for sport were reducing inactivity, prioritising women and girls, and ensuring good facilities, and acknowledged "the next step [was] … to bring it together in a clear plan," and agreed that it was "really important that it is cross-government".[242]

146. **CONCLUSION**
The benefits of sport and physical activity—improved health, stronger communities, reduced inequalities, and enhanced educational and economic outcomes—span multiple departments, yet responsibility for delivering them remains disconnected. Without a unifying national framework to align funding, planning, education, health policy and community provision, these gains will continue to be fragmented and under-realised. The question is no longer whether the Government recognises the benefits of school and community sport in principle, but whether it is willing to act on them with the urgency and ambition the evidence demands.

147. **CONCLUSION**
What is required is a decisive shift: a coherent, cross-government strategy that addresses the recommendations we have made in this report and sets a clear, long-term plan for building a more active nation through community and school-based sport and physical activity.

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238 Sport and Recreation Alliance (GAM0110)
239 Women in Sport (GAM0053)
240 Gov.uk, Get Active: a strategy for the future of sport and physical activity, 30 August 2023; National Physical Activity Taskforce
241 PQ 36804, National Physical Activity Taskforce, 20 March 2025
242 Qq231–232

148. **CONCLUSION**

‘Movement for Health’ reflects the full breadth of what is needed: more movement in all its forms, and better health in its widest sense. “Movement” captures not only structured physical exercise and sport, but the everyday activity, walking to school, playing in the street, active travel, informal play, that makes the biggest difference to long-term participation. “Health” goes beyond medical outcomes. It speaks to children’s readiness to learn, to stronger communities built through shared activity, to safer and more welcoming neighbourhoods, and to the quality of the spaces where people move. It encompasses well-maintained leisure centres, new accessible local facilities, protected playing fields, and innovative uses of parks and streets that encourage people of all ages to be active.

149. **RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend that the Government publish a cross-government ‘Movement for Health’ strategy by 31 December 2026. This strategy should establish clear national objectives to 2030, set out departmental responsibilities, and define the mechanisms through which health, education, planning, transport and community policy will contribute to increasing activity levels across England.

150. **RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend that the Government establish a time-limited, cross-departmental working group with a clearly defined set of objectives and a formal methodology for measuring progress and outputs to support the delivery of the strategy. This group should be chaired at senior ministerial level to ensure authority and accountability, and comprise senior officials and ministers from all relevant departments—including the Cabinet Office; Culture, Media and Sport; Education; Health; Local Government; Transport; the Treasury; the Women and Equalities Unit; and Work and Pensions. The group should publish regular, transparent updates against its objectives.

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Conclusions and recommendations

Healthy Finances

1. The evidence shows that funding community sport and physical activity is an investment with high returns, including savings on healthcare costs, productivity gains, and wider wellbeing benefits. The consequences of under-investment are costly. Ageing infrastructure, higher operating costs, and reduced access lead to facility closures, lost participation, and increased pressure on health and social care budgets. While the Government's £400 million will help, further action is needed if we are to keep pace with other European countries. (Conclusion, Paragraph 11)

2. We recognise the pressures on the public finances. Investing in sport, however, by creating a more active population, will eventually lead to significant savings, particularly in the health and welfare budgets. We recommend that the Government increase the 0.3% (£3.8 billion) share of total government expenditure on sport and recreation to at least 0.6% (£7.6 billion at current levels of Government spending) over the next ten years. (Recommendation, Paragraph 12)

3. The Government has a role to play in attracting investment into sport from other sources. It is important that public funding is used strategically to unlock additional investment, including private finance, pension funds, and innovative mechanisms such as crowdfunding and debt guarantees. Corporate social responsibility investment in sport for development remains disproportionately low, despite significant private sector spending on elite sport sponsorship. (Conclusion, Paragraph 17)

4. We recommend that the Government play a more proactive role in convening and enabling alternative sources of investment in grassroots sport and physical activity. This should include supporting models that leverage private and institutional finance, encouraging greater alignment between corporate social responsibility, investment and community sport outcomes, and promoting collaboration between public, charitable and private funders. (Recommendation, Paragraph 18)

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5. Funding application processes can be complex and difficult to navigate, particularly for volunteer-run grassroots organisations with limited capacity and expertise. Lengthy, technical applications and fragmented funding routes act as barriers to access, despite recent efforts by Sport England to simplify provision through the Movement Fund. There is strong support in the community sport sector for alternative, more accessible application formats, including video, pitch and interview-based approaches, alongside clearer eligibility checks and early-stage filtering. (Conclusion, Paragraph 22)

6. We recommend that the Government requires Sport England and other public funders to further simplify and standardise funding application processes to make them more accessible for grassroots organisations. This should include piloting alternative application formats such as video or interview-based submissions, introducing a light-touch initial eligibility stage, and improving pre-application support. (Recommendation, Paragraph 23)

7. There is a lack of transparency and accountability around current funding arrangements for PE and school sport. While the PE and Sport Premium has provided valuable, ring-fenced support for primary schools, inconsistent assessment, limited benchmarking and weak scrutiny by Ofsted mean that funding is not always used effectively or as intended. The fact that the Government could not provide us with further information about wider departmental contributions further highlights the need for greater clarity and oversight. (Conclusion, Paragraph 28)

8. We recommend that the Government strengthen accountability for the PE and Sport Premium by introducing clearer national reporting requirements, consistent benchmarking and more robust scrutiny through Ofsted. As a first step, we invite the Government to set out, in its response to our report, a detailed breakdown of all funding it is allocating for school sport, including information about how much funding individual Government Departments are contributing. (Recommendation, Paragraph 29)

9. We were concerned about reports that the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) had sought to renege on commitments to provide funding for physical education. Given the importance of PE and sport to improving health outcomes, and the potential in the longer-term for consequential savings to the NHS, we expect DHSC to put its share of funding into the school sport system, along with funding from the Department for Education and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. (Recommendation, Paragraph 30)

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Healthy Spaces

10. We are concerned that gaps in understanding of England's sports facility stock continue to hinder effective planning and investment. While Sport England's Active Places database provides a useful starting point, it does not offer a sufficiently complete or consistent picture of facilities, their usage or availability. The failure to deliver the National Vision for Facilities has left the sector without a clear strategic framework, limiting the ability to identify need and address inequalities in provision. (Conclusion, Paragraph 35)

11. We recommend that within six months of this report being published the Government commission a comprehensive national audit of sports and physical activity facilities, working with Sport England and sector partners. The Government should publish a timetable for the audit and report on progress within 12 months. (Recommendation, Paragraph 36)

12. Access to appropriate, safe, inclusive and affordable sports facilities is closely linked to participation. Yet while demand, particularly from women and girls, is rising, facility provision is declining due to closures, ageing infrastructure and uneven availability. Smaller sports, grassroots organisations and underserved communities are disproportionately affected and increasingly squeezed out by better-resourced users. Without sustained capital investment, improved planning and stronger safeguards for inclusive access, participation and equality will continue to erode as councils have to prioritise their statutory obligations. (Conclusion, Paragraph 43)

13. We recommend that a statutory duty be placed on local authorities to provide sporting and leisure facilities in their communities. We further recommend that, as part of the wider increase in spending on sport and recreation, the Government provide councils with extra capital funding sufficient to enable them to meet this duty. As we have said, spending on sport and recreation should be seen as investment. (Recommendation, Paragraph 44)

14. Whilst at this stage it is not possible to evaluate the scale of the impact of business rate changes on the grassroots sport sector as a whole, it is important that any negative effects on sports clubs and facilities are mitigated, given that many facilities are already under significant financial pressure. (Conclusion, Paragraph 46)

15. We ask the Government to set out in its response to our report the measures it intends to take to relieve any adverse effects on sporting facilities from its recent business rate changes. We further recommend that the Government undertake a full impact assessment to ensure that potential economic, social, and operational consequences for sport and leisure facilities are fully understood. (Recommendation, Paragraph 46)

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16. We are concerned about Sport England losing its function as a Statutory Planning Consultee. Given the vital importance of playing fields to grassroots sport, Ministers in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport should be arguing strongly for the protection of Sport England's role. It is telling that the three bodies the Government is proposing to remove from the consultee list are all accountable to the DCMS. (Conclusion, Paragraph 51)

17. We recommend that the Government retain Sport England as a Statutory Planning Consultee. For its part, Sport England needs to redouble its efforts to turn its responses around swiftly. (Recommendation, Paragraph 52)

18. We recommend that any future planning reforms include a robust and enforceable mechanism to protect playing fields and sports facilities, safeguarding these vital community assets for future generations. (Recommendation, Paragraph 53)

19. We welcome the creative steps organisations have taken to develop innovative approaches to create new spaces and facilities. (Conclusion, Paragraph 58)

20. We recommend that the Government legislate to require local authorities and housing associations to remove unnecessary "No Ball Games" signs, to make public spaces more usable for children's play. (Recommendation, Paragraph 59)

21. We heard mixed views about the merits of the Opening School Facilities Fund. We are concerned, however, that the closure of the fund, without a replacement, has left facilities underused despite clear demand from young people. (Conclusion, Paragraph 62)

22. We recommend that the Government reinstate support for opening school sports facilities to communities, but that it do so through a long-term, place-based funding model, learning lessons from the experience of the Opening School Facilities Fund. The new programme should be locally informed, include clear sustainability and lifecycle cost requirements, and be aligned with wider community sport and health strategies to ensure lasting impact and value for public money. (Recommendation, Paragraph 63)

Healthy Schools

23. Physical education and daily movement are not being fully utilised in schools, leaving too many children, particularly the least active, without the health, wellbeing and learning benefits that regular activity provides. Curriculum time for PE has declined, its non-core status has reduced its

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perceived value, and inequalities in participation have widened as a result. Increasing timetabled PE is important, but meaningful change depends on embedding movement throughout the whole school day. Making PE a core subject would raise its status and help ensure that physical activity is integrated across teaching and learning, rather than squeezed from the timetable. (Conclusion, Paragraph 73)

24. We recommend that the Government strengthen the national curriculum by confirming that as part of the new approach to school sport announced in June 2025, a minimum of two hours of high-quality PE each week will be mandatory. (Recommendation, Paragraph 74)

25. We recommend that the Government require schools to have a policy to give every child the opportunity to achieve at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day. We further recommend that the Government set clear expectations for activity to be woven into the school day, through short movement breaks, active travel, and wrap-around provision. (Recommendation, Paragraph 75)

26. We recommend that the Government make physical education a core subject within the national curriculum. (Recommendation, Paragraph 76)

27. Embedding physical activity throughout the school week to improve children's health, wellbeing, and educational attainment ultimately depends on the expertise of the nation's teachers. While we welcome schools working with local clubs and organisations, it remains essential that qualified teachers play a central role, as they understand the diverse needs of every child in the class—not just the rules or techniques of a particular sport. Investing in better-trained teachers is essential to improving children's lifelong relationship with physical activity. (Conclusion, Paragraph 79)

28. The Government should publish a plan to strengthen initial teacher training in physical education and physical activity and ongoing professional development for all teachers, particularly at primary level. (Recommendation, Paragraph 80)

29. We recommend that the Government issue guidance making clear that schools are expected to adopt PE kit and uniform policies that prioritise comfort, inclusivity and dignity—particularly for girls and pupils with protected characteristics. Schools should work directly with students to provide flexible clothing options, including guidance on sports bras, and take practical steps such as improving privacy in changing areas to reduce anxiety and encourage sustained participation in PE. The Government should also promote more practical, activity-friendly school uniforms, such as allowing sportswear or trainers as standard, to ensure pupils can

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move comfortably throughout the day. These measures would help reduce barriers to activity, lower costs for families and increase participation, particularly among girls. (Recommendation, Paragraph 86)

30. Evidence shows that a narrow, traditional PE curriculum often alienates pupils who feel less confident or "sporty", particularly girls and children with SEND. Broadening the offer to include non-traditional sports, dance and outdoor activities helps make PE more enjoyable and accessible, supporting physical literacy and long-term engagement. (Conclusion, Paragraph 92)

31. We recommend that the Government require and support schools to deliver a broader and more inclusive PE curriculum that prioritises enjoyment, comfort and a welcoming environment for all pupils. Alongside a wider range of activities, we recommend that schools should offer supportive, age-appropriate competition that helps children learn from both success and failure without making excellence the sole focus. High achievers should be encouraged to reach their potential, but schools should place equal value on progress from inactivity to participation, recognising this as a significant success in its own right. (Recommendation, Paragraph 93)

32. We recommend the Government build on the success of the School Games Organiser network with its new School Sport Partnership by increasing capacity and ensuring consistent national coverage. We invite the Government in responding to our report to set out how the scheme will work in practice, how it will build on lessons from the School Games Organiser scheme, how much funding will go into it, and what mechanisms will be in place to ensure this funding is effectively distributed. (Recommendation, Paragraph 101)

Healthy Communities

33. Joining a sports club, community walking club or a leisure centre is a wonderful way to meet new people in the community and to make connections. When local people come together through sport and physical activity, further benefits follow, from increased spending in nearby businesses to improved understanding between communities who might not otherwise meet. (Conclusion, Paragraph 108)

34. We recommend that the Government should provide national funding and guidance to enable local authorities, clubs and community organisations to expand inclusive initiatives, (such as Play Streets, walking sports and evidence-backed programmes like Big Sister), prioritising those that engage older generations, disadvantaged groups and young people with limited support networks. (Recommendation, Paragraph 109)

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35. We support a place-based approach to ensure that community needs are understood and met in order to achieve the largest increase in activity levels. Every community is different, and by tailoring initiatives to the particular characteristics of an area, the Government and Sport England can greatly increase their chances of success. (Conclusion, Paragraph 116)

36. We recommend that the Government review the impact of the place-based funding model annually, publishing metrics to ensure that 'doubly-disadvantaged' neighbourhoods are being fully included in the process. (Recommendation, Paragraph 117)

37. Increasing women's participation in sport depends not only on opportunities to play, but also on visibility and representation. Evidence shows that when women's sport is regularly broadcast, especially on free-to-air TV, girls are more likely to feel inspired and motivated to be active. A dedicated broadcast slot for women's football would provide consistent coverage, grow audiences and challenge persistent gender stereotypes. (Conclusion, Paragraph 121)

38. We recommend that the Government intervene in discussions between the Premier League, Women's Professional Leagues Limited, English Football League and Football Association to ensure that women's football is exempt from the restrictions on broadcasting in the 3pm on Saturday slot. (Recommendation, Paragraph 122)

39. Sport and physical activity remain underrecognised within national health policy, despite strong evidence of their value for prevention, wellbeing and the management of longterm conditions, and despite the Government's stated support. While England is regarded as a leader in social prescribing, provision remains inconsistent and lacks an overarching strategy. Gyms, leisure centres and community groups already play a substantial role—supporting musculoskeletal health, improving mental wellbeing and accommodating NHS referrals—but their potential is far from fully realised. Physical activity consistently delivers major physical and mental health benefits, yet it is still not fully embedded within health policy or treatment pathways. Given its proven ability to reduce illness, improve wellbeing and ease pressure on the NHS, the Government should integrate sport and physical activity more firmly into preventative health, mental health support and social prescribing. (Conclusion, Paragraph 129)

40. We recommend that the Government provide clearer national guidance and sustained funding to health, sport and local partners so that proven models can expand and more people, especially those with long-term conditions, poor mental health or at risk of inactivity, can benefit from accessible, community-based activity as part of their overall health

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and wellbeing support. The guidance should cover how activities like bowls and walking sports can be signposted via social prescribing. (Recommendation, Paragraph 130)

41. Volunteers are essential to the delivery of community sport. Across the country, thousands of people give their time to coach, officiate and support grassroots clubs, often sustaining provision that would not otherwise exist. We want everyone to have the chance to volunteer. A greater mix of volunteers should improve community relationships and lead to a more diverse volunteering network which in turn will provide role models to those currently less inclined to attend clubs and groups. A coherent policy framework for volunteering would help strengthen the volunteer workforce and ensure that community sport is better supported and more sustainable. (Conclusion, Paragraph 137)

42. The Government should publish a comprehensive volunteering policy for sport and physical activity. This should include linking volunteering to career development and skills pathways; establishing national awards or recognition schemes for volunteers in community sport; expanding flexible and inclusive volunteering opportunities; and improving digital tools to support recruitment, retention and coordination of volunteers. (Recommendation, Paragraph 138)

43. We recognise the importance of providing safe environments for everyone attending sports clubs or activity groups and would not want to advocate for anything that would compromise this. However, we call on the Government to be mindful of the added burden on volunteers that legislative changes can cause. (Conclusion, Paragraph 139)

44. We recommend that the Government work with Sport England to identify steps that can be taken to streamline volunteer administration. This might include establishing a central register so that qualifications and DBS checks can be carried between sports and activity groups. (Recommendation, Paragraph 140)

Conclusion: The Case for a Strategy

45. The benefits of sport and physical activity—improved health, stronger communities, reduced inequalities, and enhanced educational and economic outcomes—span multiple departments, yet responsibility for delivering them remains disconnected. Without a unifying national framework to align funding, planning, education, health policy and community provision, these gains will continue to be fragmented and under-realised. The question is no longer whether the Government recognises

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the benefits of school and community sport in principle, but whether it is willing to act on them with the urgency and ambition the evidence demands. (Conclusion, Paragraph 146)

46. What is required is a decisive shift: a coherent, cross-government strategy that addresses the recommendations we have made in this report and sets a clear, long-term plan for building a more active nation through community and school-based sport and physical activity. (Conclusion, Paragraph 147)

47. 'Movement for Health' reflects the full breadth of what is needed: more movement in all its forms, and better health in its widest sense. "Movement" captures not only structured physical exercise and sport, but the everyday activity, walking to school, playing in the street, active travel, informal play, that makes the biggest difference to long-term participation. "Health" goes beyond medical outcomes. It speaks to children's readiness to learn, to stronger communities built through shared activity, to safer and more welcoming neighbourhoods, and to the quality of the spaces where people move. It encompasses well-maintained leisure centres, new accessible local facilities, protected playing fields, and innovative uses of parks and streets that encourage people of all ages to be active. (Conclusion, Paragraph 148)

48. We recommend that the Government publish a cross-government 'Movement for Health' strategy by 31 December 2026. This strategy should establish clear national objectives to 2030, set out departmental responsibilities, and define the mechanisms through which health, education, planning, transport and community policy will contribute to increasing activity levels across England. (Recommendation, Paragraph 149)

49. We recommend that the Government establish a time-limited, cross-departmental working group with a clearly defined set of objectives and a formal methodology for measuring progress and outputs to support the delivery of the strategy. This group should be chaired at senior ministerial level to ensure authority and accountability, and comprise senior officials and ministers from all relevant departments—including the Cabinet Office; Culture, Media and Sport; Education; Health; Local Government; Transport; the Treasury; the Women and Equalities Unit; and Work and Pensions. The group should publish regular, transparent updates against its objectives. (Recommendation, Paragraph 150)

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Annex: Survey Results

During the inquiry, we conducted a survey with over 1700 school children to get some feedback from them on their experience of school sports. The key findings were as follows:

- 61% of children surveyed were from the East Midlands, and a further 22% were from the West Midlands. 70% of children surveyed said they were in Key Stage 3, the remainder were equally split between Key Stages 2 and 4. Approximately 3% either selected 'Prefer not to say' or 'Something else' when asked what best described their gender. The remaining 97% were equally split between 'boy' and 'girl'.
- More than half (57%) of children surveyed said 'yes' when asked if they enjoy P.E. classes. Only 6% answered 'no' with the rest saying 'sometimes'.
    - Children who identified as girls were less likely than boys to say 'yes' when asked if they enjoyed P.E. classes, with respectively 46% and 70% saying 'yes'. Girls were twice as likely as boys to answer 'no', at 8% compared with 4%.
    - Children who did not identify themselves as either 'boys' or 'girls' were much more likely to say they did not enjoy P.E., with 22% answering 'no'.
    - Children in KS4 were more likely to say they did not enjoy P.E. classes (14%).
- Around half of children surveyed said that 'A different choice of sporting activities' would improve their enjoyment of P.E. classes, followed by 'More competition', with 17%. (This was a single option question.)
    - This pattern held for surveyed children in all key stages, with the exception of children in KS3, for whom the second most popular option was 'better teaching'.
    - Girls were less likely to choose 'more competition' than boys (12% and 22%) although it was still their second most popular choice.

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    - Only one child who said they did not enjoy P.E. selected 'more competition'. For children who said they did not or only sometimes enjoy P.E., the most popular option was still 'a different choice' but the second most popular option for children who said 'no' was 'fewer competitive activities' and for children who only sometimes enjoy P.E. this was 'a different P.E. kit' closely followed by 'fewer competitive activities'.

- 72% of children surveyed said they did more than 1 hour of sport or P.E. every week. 8% said they did less than one hour.
    - Children in Key Stage Four were more likely to say they did less than one hour each week, with 27% selecting this option, 56% saying they did one hour, and only 17% saying they did more than one hour. KS2 and 3 children had similar levels of activity, with 81% saying they did more than one hour a week.
- When asked 'What sports do you wish your school offered that it doesn't already?', the most popular option was boxing, with 35% of children surveyed selecting this option, followed by swimming with 33%. However, when broken down by demographics, the children surveyed were divided on which sports they would like to be offered. The sport that received the most widespread support was swimming.
- When asked, a quarter of children surveyed said that they did not know who to speak to or where to go for help if they wanted to join a sports team or play sports outside of school.

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Formal minutes

Tuesday 14 April 2026

Members present:

Dame Caroline Dinenage, in the Chair

Bayo Alaba

Vicky Foxcroft

Rt Hon Damian Hinds

Natasha Irons

Liz Jarvis

Anneliese Midgley

Jo Platt

Jeff Smith

Cameron Thomas

Game On: Community and school sport

Draft Report (*Game On: Community and school sport*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 150 read and agreed to.

Annex agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Fourth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

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Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No.134.

Adjournment

Adjourned till Tuesday 21 April at 9.30 am.

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Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee's website.

Tuesday 25 February 2025

Montell Douglas, Olympian; **Anna Hopkin MBE**, Olympian; **Ali Oliver MBE**, Chief Executive, Youth Sport Trust; **Alistair Patrick-Heselton**, Paralympian
Q1–52

Tuesday 25 March 2025

Sarah Kaye, Chief Executive, Sported; **Andy Taylor**, Chief Executive, Active Partnerships; **Lisa Wainwright MBE**, Chief Executive, Sport and Recreation Alliance
Q53–84

Stephanie Hilborne OBE, Chief Executive, Women in Sport; **Mark Lawrie**, Chief Executive, StreetGames; **Emily Robinson**, Chief Executive, London Sport; **Anna Scott-Marshall**, Director of Communications & Social Impact, ParalympicsGB
Q85–105

Tuesday 22 April 2025

Paige Cronje, Board Director, SportCheer England; **Stewart Kellett**, Chief Executive, Basketball England; **Scott Lloyd**, Chief Executive, Lawn Tennis Association
Q106–129

Jon Cockcroft, Chief Executive, Bowls England; **Jordan Letts**, Chief Executive, Northampton Saints Foundation; **Kate Stephens**, Chief Executive, Chance to Shine
Q130–164

Tuesday 3 June 2025

Huw Edwards, Chief Executive, UKactive; **Councillor Peter Mason**, Leader, London Borough of Ealing, Local Government Association; **Robert Sullivan**, Chief Executive, Football Foundation
Q165–192

Tim Hollingsworth OBE, Chief Executive, Sport England
Q193–219

EMBARGOED ADVANCE NOTICE: Not to be published in full, or in part, in any form before 00.01am on Monday 20 April 2026.

Wednesday 16 July 2025

Stephanie Peacock MP, Minister for Sport, Media, Civil Society and Youth, Department for Culture, Media and Sport; **Catherine McKinnell MP**, Minister for School Standards, Department for Education; **Adam Conant**, Deputy Director, Head of Sport, Department for Culture, Media and Sport; **Matthew Hopkinson**, Deputy Director, Life Skills Division, Department for Education

Q220–272

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Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee's website.

GAM numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1	Access Sport	GAM0098
2	Active Dorset CIC	GAM0059
3	Active Essex	GAM0034
4	Active Kent and Medway	GAM0036
5	Active Partnerships National Organisation	GAM0083
6	Activity Alliance	GAM0035
7	Angling Trust	GAM0094
8	Anonymised	GAM0088
9	AoC Sport	GAM0047
10	Astley & Tyldesley Cycling Club	GAM0004
11	Athlete Interactions	GAM0097
12	Berry, Mr Alan (Retired / Volunteer Badminton Coach, Badminton Coach for various oranisations)	GAM0017
13	British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES)	GAM0021
14	British Gymnastics	GAM0109
15	Chance to Shine	GAM0041
16	Christ's Hospital	GAM0055
17	Community Leisure UK	GAM0101
18	Counsel Ltd.; and Loughborough University	GAM0089
19	Cricket Club Development Network	GAM0086
20	Duncan, Professor Michael (Professor of Sport and Exercise Science, Coventry University)	GAM0052
21	EFL in the Community	GAM0044
22	Energize Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin	GAM0024
23	England and Wales Cricket Board	GAM0032

EMBARGOED ADVANCE NOTICE: Not to be published in full, or in part, in any form before 00.01am on Monday 20 April 2026.

24	Entain	GAM0064
25	Fitmedia	GAM0046
26	Flutter Entertainment	GAM0060
27	Football Foundation	GAM0054
28	Fund Her Tri UK	GAM0028
29	GM Moving	GAM0061
30	Get Set 4 Tennis CIC	GAM0014
31	Girlguiding	GAM0040
32	Give It Your Max Children's Tennis Charity	GAM0008
33	Greater Manchester Moving	GAM0001
34	Heathfield Junior School	GAM0006
35	Howells, Dr Kristy (Reader in Children's Health, Sport Pedagogy and Physical Education, Canterbury Christ Church University)	GAM0012
36	Hughes, Mr Liam	GAM0076
37	In Her Place	GAM0050
38	Inclusive Sportswear	GAM0078
39	James, Fran (Football and Climate Change Newsletter)	GAM0104
40	Kyniska Advocacy	GAM0096
41	LTA	GAM0080
42	Local Government Association	GAM0074
43	Local Trust	GAM0051
44	Loftus, Richard (Founder, Well Run Brum)	GAM0075
45	London Marathon	GAM0114
46	London Sport	GAM0056
47	London Youth	GAM0027
48	London Youth Games Foundation	GAM0038
49	Loughborough University	GAM0063
50	Mackay, Macbeth (Lecturer in Sports Business and Marketing, UCFB); and Harvey, I.	GAM0048
51	Mackintosh, Dr Christopher (Senior Lecturer in Sport Development and Coaching , Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester Institute of Sport, Dept. of Sport and Exercise Sciences)	GAM0013

EMBARGOED ADVANCE NOTICE: Not to be published in full or in part, in any form before 00.01am on Monday 20 April 2026.

52	Medway Basketball Association	GAM0092
53	NAHT	GAM0039
54	NASUWT - The Teachers' Union	GAM0030
55	Neurodiverse Sport	GAM0009
56	New College Leicester, Learning and Sports Village	GAM0010
57	Nolan, Dr Darren (Senior Lecturer in Sport Coaching, University of Hertfordshire)	GAM0003
58	North Yorkshire Sport	GAM0005
59	One Dance UK	GAM0095
60	Ormerod, Mr Mark (CEO/Honorary Vice President/Senior Independent Director, Leap/ SportsAid Eastern/Bedford Blues Foundation)	GAM0081
61	Paddle UK	GAM0045
62	Palace for Life Foundation	GAM0102
63	ParalympicsGB	GAM0077
64	Platform Cricket	GAM0073
65	Podium Analytics	GAM0091
66	Royal Ballet and Opera	GAM0031
67	Rugby Football League	GAM0090
68	Rugby Football Union	GAM0084
69	Ryall, Dr Emily (Reader in Applied Philosophy, University of Gloucestershire); and Bullingham, Dr Rachael (Senior Lecturer in Sport and Exercise, University of Gloucestershire)	GAM0016
70	Sandford, Dr Rachel (Reader at Loughborough University (School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences)); and Hooper, Dr Oliver (Senior Lecturer at Loughborough University (School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences))	GAM0107
71	Sayers, Dr Esther (Senior Lecturer, Department of Educational Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London); Bella Warley (Skateable Spaces Development Officer, Skateboard GB); and Lawton, Chris (Community Development Officer, Skateboard GB)	GAM0037
72	Sex Matters	GAM0065
73	Sky	GAM0042
74	Spirit of 2012	GAM0058
75	Sport England	GAM0026

EMBARGOED ADVANCE NOTICE: Not to be published in full, or in part, in any form before 00.01am on Monday 20 April 2026.

76	Sport and Recreation Alliance	GAM0110
77	Sport for Development Coalition	GAM0057
78	SportCheer England	GAM0113
79	Sported	GAM0025
80	Spring Park Shirley Bowling Club	GAM0068
81	StreetGames	GAM0029
82	Sunderland City Council	GAM0087
83	Swim Alliance	GAM0112
84	Swim England	GAM0111
85	The Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA)	GAM0069
86	The Dan Maskell Tennis Trust	GAM0011
87	The Down's Syndrome Association	GAM0072
88	The Duke of Edinburgh's Award	GAM0023
89	The Football Association	GAM0106
90	The Premier League	GAM0108
91	The Queen's Club Foundation	GAM0071
92	The Richmond Group of Charities	GAM0043
93	The Sport Legacy Foundation	GAM0070
94	The Sports Trust	GAM0066
95	Twell, Stephanie	GAM0103
96	UCL Students' Union	GAM0022
97	UK Government	GAM0105
98	UKactive	GAM0062
99	University of Bradford; Bradford Institute for Health Research; and The Yorkshire Sport Foundation	GAM0093
100	University of Leeds; West Yorkshire Combined Authority; Keep Britain Tidy; and Make Space for Girls	GAM0018
101	West Yorkshire Combined Authority	GAM0085
102	Women in Sport	GAM0053
103	Yamauchi, Mara (Self-employed)	GAM0049
104	Youth Charter	GAM0067
105	Youth Sport Trust	GAM0033

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List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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Session 2024–26

Number	Title	Reference
3rd	Pre-appointment hearing for the Chair of the Charity Commission	HC 1340
2nd	Pre-appointment hearing for the Chair of the Independent Football Regulator	HC 694
1st	British film and high-end television	HC 328
5th Special	Independent fan-led review of live and electronic music	HC 1628
4th Special	British film and high-end television: Government Response	HC 1123
3rd Special	Grassroots music venues: Government response	HC 380
2nd Special	Trusted voices: Government response	HC 292
1st Special	Creator remuneration: Government response	HC 293

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