

**FRIDAY 2 JULY**

**Code for Sports Governance strengthened following major review**

* Major review highlights improvements made in sports governance over past five years, including in diversity & inclusion - but a need to go further
* Organisations which receive significant funding from Sport England & UK Sport will have to publish ambitious annual plans to accelerate diversity & inclusion at Board level and beyond
* Requirement to appoint a Director to lead on welfare and safety among other requirements introduced

Sport England and UK Sport have today confirmed changes to the Code for Sports Governance following an extensive consultation involving hundreds of organisations.

While continuing to drive improvement across all areas of governance, the revised approach is primarily focused on ensuring that bodies in receipt of substantial public funding from Sport England and UK Sport have a detailed and ambitious Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) to increase the diversity on their Boards and senior leadership teams, as well as across their wider organisations.

The requirement to set plans and publish them, focusing on organisations as a whole, will encourage transparency about where organisations are making progress and where they are falling behind.

Launched in 2016, the Code for Sports Governance has been applied to over 4,000 organisations that receive government and Lottery funding from Sport England and UK Sport. It has had a significant impact since its introduction, helping to improve the standard of governance across national sports organisations while accelerating the diversity of boards.

Since its introduction representation on Boards across sport from women, people from Black, Asian and other ethnically diverse backgrounds and those with a declared disability has increased notably.

The original Code contained a clear requirement for funded bodies to drive greater diversity on their Boards, helping female representation on the Boards of partners complying with the Code to rise to 44%. Numbers have also risen in relation to representation from people from Black, Asian and other ethnically diverse backgrounds, and from those with a declared disability, increasing respectively to 13%\*[[1]](#footnote-2) (from 4% in 2015) and 13% (from 3% in 2015), reflecting the progress and desire of the sector to make change.

While progress has taken place, the review highlighted the need for organisations working in sport and physical activity to do more and go further, in considering how they can best reflect society as a whole, across a wider range protected characteristics as well as regional and socio-economic factors.

The evolution of the Code therefore puts a stronger emphasis on ensuring organisations have greater ambitions to drive up further diversity and inclusion across all aspects of their work.

Following the conclusion of the review, Sport England and UK Sport can now confirm a number of changes:

* Each relevant partner, including national governing bodies, will be required to agree a Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) with Sport England and UK Sport. The plans are expected to be ambitious and robust and set out clearly how partners will work to improve diversity and inclusion across their whole organisation – not just at Board level. The annual publication of DIAPs will deliver greater transparency about progress, allowing the public celebration of success but also highlighting where there are gaps and where some organisations fall behind. Organisations will be supported to set relevant benchmarks in specific areas and will be expected to publish their first plans by the end of next summer, with meaningful progress made within two years. Sport England and UK Sport will secure additional support to help develop and monitor DIAPs. If a sustained lack of commitment or progress is not evident, this will be deemed non-compliant and withdrawal of funding will be actively considered.
* To help strengthen welfare and safety in sport, organisations will be required to appoint a Director to take a lead in this area. This requirement follows [other major work on this issue](https://www.sportengland.org/news/update-our-safeguarding-work), including investing to support organisations with their own safeguarding work, and the expansion of the Safeguarding Case Management Service to help more sporting organisations access expert support.
* Organisations will now be asked to implement and promote good governance standards, including with respect to diversity and inclusion, throughout their wider operations.Good examples of where this is already happening include the Football Association's *Code of Governance for County Football Associations* and the England and Wales Cricket Board's *County Governance Framework.* Both of which are driving improved standards of governance and increased diversity across their county and regional organisations.
* The Code will require Boards to factor impact on stakeholders, the environment and wider society into their decisions and the actions implemented by their organisation. This might be in relation to transport or procurement policies, or how facilities are developed, for example.

Sport England and UK Sport will provide relevant investment and resource support with partners to help them meet the goals set out within each DIAP, including introducing targeted support to assist with monitoring and delivering progress, and extending their partnership with Perrett Laver by a further year.

This programme works to identify and develop a network of senior, experienced candidates from a range of backgrounds, including women, people from Black, Asian and other ethnically diverse backgrounds disabled and LGBT+ people. So far it has supported 37 appointments made to sports boards, 65% of which have been from Black, Asian and other ethnically diverse backgrounds, 73% of which have been female, and 8% of which have been individuals with a declared disability.

Supported by £450k of funding from Sport England and UK Sport, new elements to this partnership confirmed today include:

* A pilot for improving diversity at regional/local level, mirroring the national programme that has been so successful. Several National Governing Bodies are part of the pilot which will also support the new cascading Requirement in the Code.
* Funding to support diverse recruitment at board level – enabling partners not only to benefit from the network Perrett Laver has developed but also to secure some support from Perrett Laver for specific recruitments.

To date, funded organisations have welcomed this initiative as a powerful way of ensuring they are able to access potential candidates who might previously not have been on their radar. Candidates who have successfully come through this process include Jennifer Thomas (Non-Executive Director, England Netball), Tunji Akintokun MBE (Non-Executive Director, England Athletics), Sanjay Bhandari (Board Trustee, GreaterSport) and Kirsten Furber (Independent Non-Executive Director, British Wheelchair Basketball).

**Chief Executive of Sport England, Tim Hollingsworth said:**

“Today marks a milestone in the evolution of our sector, the way it is run and how we ensure fairness and inclusion for all.

“We are incredibly proud of the impact the Code for Sports Governance has had since 2016, and the way it has been adopted as a vehicle for meaningful and positive change.

“The changes announced today build on this momentum. We are confident that the new requirements - and the focus in particular on the impact of ambitious Diversity and Inclusion Action Plans - will be welcomed and embraced. It is a further step towards greater diversity of background, experience and understanding of sport and activity environments having a seat at the table at the very top of sporting organisations.”

**Chief Executive of UK Sport, Sally Munday said:**

“The review undertaken into the Code for Sports Governance is an important part of UK Sport’s and Sport England’s commitment to ensuring the organisations we invest in are well governed. A huge driver for us is in supporting thriving organisations that reflect the diversity of the country we represent.

“The review is a clear demonstration of the amount of positive change that can be made to drive good governance in sport, and that diversity of thought around board tables leads to better run organisations. The review has presented some clear next steps and we look forward to working with our partners and stakeholders to keep pushing up the standards of how high-performance sport is led and managed and to ensure our high-performance community is truly inclusive.”

**Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston said:**

"I firmly believe that sport should lead the way in good governance, diversity and inclusion. The launch of the Code for Sports Governance in 2016 marked a step change in governance standards across the sector. These changes announced today are the next phase in making sport stronger for the future.

"I'd like to thank UK Sport, Sport England and everyone that took part in the review for the important role they have played in setting new standards going forward. I look forward to continuing to work towards our shared goal of a robust, diverse and fair sports sector."

**Edleen John, The FA’s Director of International Relations, Corporate Affairs and Co-Partner for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, said:**

“We were proud to be the first national governing body in English sport to introduce a regional code of governance, which includes provisions for gender and ethnic diversity, as well as youth representation. Our current equality, diversity and inclusion strategy, In Pursuit of Progress, sets clear and ambitious targets to drive meaningful change within our organisation and across the game, focusing on initiatives to promote equality and increase the diversity of those playing, officiating, coaching, leading and governing English football. Using our influence to deliver a game free from discrimination is one of our key strategic objectives over the next three years as we strive to ensure our game truly embraces diversity and is inclusive at all levels.

“We welcome the changes to the Code for Sports Governance, which will ensure greater transparency within sporting organisations across the country and will mean they are better placed to truly accelerate and prioritise diversity and inclusion.”

**Chief Executive of the ECB, Tom Harrison said:**

“Good governance and a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of our ambitions to make cricket a game for everyone. We therefore welcome Sport England’s announcement of their renewed Code for Sports Governance and the new requirements it brings. The original Code was a major catalyst for change across the sports industry including cricket, however we have a great deal more to do and the new Code announced today will help us continue to work with the whole game towards the highest standards of governance and inclusion.”

**Chief Executive of UK Athletics, Jo Coates said:**

“We welcome the findings and clear actions generated by the review of the Code of Sports Governance. The continuing commitment to diversity and inclusion across sport is a progressive and positive initiative that UK Athletics is delighted to support.

“Sporting organisations should set a clear example, across all aspects of their activity, of the benefits of a truly diverse and inclusive society. I believe athletics has been at the forefront of pursuing such an approach in recent years, but there is always more that can be done.

“We are dedicated to continuing our work to champion diversity in areas such as gender, ethnicity and disability for the benefit of everybody within the high-performance community. We will work closely with UK Sport and the Home Country Athletics Federations to ensure this genuinely inclusive vision becomes a reality. We look forward to a time when there are no barriers to participation in sport at the highest level in the UK.”

**Chief Executive of the LTA, Scott Lloyd said:**

“The LTA is committed to reflecting the diversity of the communities we represent through all areas of tennis in Britain, including through our governance. We recently launched a new inclusion strategy to lead the way in driving change and help ensure inclusion is at the heart of our sport.

“We are determined to ensure we have the highest governance standards throughout our sport, including ongoing collaboration with our county associations to establish a County Governance Framework.

“The changes to the Code for Sports Governance are welcome, and we look forward to working with Sport England and UK Sport to continue to drive up standards in tennis.”

**Chief Executive of Activity Alliance, Barry Horne said:**

“Activity Alliance welcomes the strong commitment to diversity and the proactive inclusion of disabled people in all aspects of sports governance and delivery. The code clearly requires sports organisations to build on the good progress being made on gender diversity. There is still much more work to do to ensure a clear commitment to equality for everyone, especially for disabled people. Bodies will now need to produce, and deliver on, meaningful plans to bring disabled people and other under-represented groups into the heart of their decision making.

“The days when organisations can assume they know how to deliver to diverse communities without involving them are over. We will work with Sport England and partners to achieve this genuinely inclusive vision and ensure there is greater fairness for disabled people in sport and activity.”

**Chief Executive of the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust, Ben Hilton said:**

“The Code has so far been hugely important in encouraging transparency and delivering genuine progress around areas like diversity and inclusion.

“We welcome today's changes and believe they will make a further positive impact and an enormous contribution to ensure that anyone who is involved in sport and sport for development, can do so in a safe, well run and inclusive environment.”

**Chief Executive of SportsAid, Tim Lawler said:**

“At SportsAid, we have long believed that diversity equals excellence. Only with a diverse range of people at every level can organisations truly reach their full potential.

“The sporting world is now going through an important period of education and action on diversity and inclusion, and initiatives like the Diversity in Sport Leadership programme from Sport England, UK Sport and Perrett Laver is an essential part of that.

“The programme has allowed us to bring in exceptional leaders from the private sector who have helped us challenge our processes and create structures and systems that are inclusive to all. Sport England, UK Sport and Perrett Laver’s programme has already broken down so many barriers to entry in sport, and we would encourage any leaders and organisations to engage with the programme to continue driving positive change.”

**Chief Executive of Wesport Active Partnership, Steve Nelson said:**

“Having the Code has already brought significant changes in the governance of sports organisations.

“The review announced today builds on this – organisations in our sector will need to continue to improve their governance to reflect the communities they are serving and inspire diverse and inclusive sport at every level and in all types of rolls.”

**Chief Executive of the Royal Yachting Association, Sarah Treseder OBE said:**

“The RYA welcomes the tailored approach taken by Sport England and UK Sport to strengthen and develop the Code for Sports Governance. This feels like a mature, nuanced and positive way to address some fundamental issues, which are already at the heart of our strategy.

“This will build on our public commitment to make boating a more inclusive & diverse activity, by ensuring the right changes are embedded in our governance structures, policies and procedures. Importantly it will also help to ensure we are held to account in a meaningful way on the impact of our work. We look forward to working in partnership to implement the new Code.”

**A number of individuals who have been supported by the Perrett Laver programme have offered their support for the extension of the partnership as part of the Code’s revisions.**

**Non-Executive Director at England Athletics Tunji Akintokun MBE said:**

“My role with England Athletics has been a hugely rewarding one to take on. Diversity in athletics is something very close to my heart and this position has given me an opportunity to really drive the change I want to see.

“Personally, it has allowed me to combine my passion for a sport with my professional skills and make a difference at grass roots level, and I have learnt a huge amount to take into my full-time role in professional services.

“In any organisation, you can only improve diversity by ensuring that people see people who look like them at the top. I truly believe that Sport England and Perrett Laver’s Diversity in Sport Leadership Programme is therefore crucial in driving positive change at every level of sport.”

**Non-Executive Director at England Netball, Jennifer Thomas said:**

“Sport has played such an important role in my professional and personal development, and I reached a point in my career when I wanted to give something back.

“The Diversity in Sport Leadership programme with Perrett Laver has given me the opportunity do that. It has allowed me to transfer my professional experience into a governance role and begin to drive the change I want to see in sport.

“The board team at Sport England really encourages a hands-on approach and there have been opportunities to work on some amazing projects. I have offered myself as a sounding board for diversity and inclusion, and hopefully given some insight that will help drive diversity throughout the organisation.

“I would highly recommend that any private sector leaders with an interest in sport pursue Perrett Laver’s Diversity in Sport Leadership programme.”

**\*\*\*ENDS\*\*\***

**Notes to Editors**

As part of Sport England and UK Sport’s consultation with partners, Savanta ComRes conducted an online consultation survey which gathered responses between 23rd November to 14th December 2020. Data tables can be found at [comresglobal.com](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/WsJaCmZw0sjpA4jSGKxcy?domain=comresglobal.com).

In addition to this survey, Savanta ComRes conducted ten focus groups with representatives from organisations that comply with Tier 1 and Tier 3 of the Code for Sport Governance, as well as Equality, Diversity and Inclusion leads.

**About the consultation process**

These changes are the result of an extensive review process, which included an open consultation with over 200 responses. Sport England and UK Sport also reviewed the latest best practice and our own learnings over the last four years.

Sport England and UK Sport also conducted a Diversity in Sport Governance Survey, the most comprehensive Audit we have done since the Code was launched in 2016.

This review process highlighted the need for sports bodies to go further in considering how they can best reflect society as a whole, including regional and socio-economic factors.

**About the different Tiers within the Code for Sports Governance**

The Tiers – Tier 1, 2 and 3 – exist to enable proportionate implementation of the Code. Tier is determined by size and nature of investment (e.g. long-term/strategic or singular). Each Tier has a different level of mandatory governance requirements.

**Tier 3** represents the top level of mandatory governance Requirements in this Code. The Requirements in this Tier seek to ensure high governance standards because of the significant public investment being made. Sport England and UK Sport will look for a formal commitment from organisations to meet Requirements within set timescales. UK Sport and Sport England will generally categorise an investment as Tier 3 if:

• the funding is intended to be granted over a period of years;

• the funding is granted for a continuing activity rather than a one-off project; and

• the total amount of funding is greater than £1m

Consideration will also be given to the size of the organisation. Organisations receiving funding for significant, medium to long term activity should generally expect to be in Tier 3.

Organisations will be placed into **Tier 2** where UK Sport and/or Sport England require them to go further than the Requirements in Tier 1, but not as far as full compliance with Tier 3.

This might be because of their resources, or because the investment is significant but made on a one-off (rather than longer-term) basis. It could also be because the investment signals the start of a new strategic relationship between Sport England/UK Sport and an organisation, but where the parameters of the relationship are still being established.

Organisations receiving an investment categorised as Tier 2 will be expected to meet all of the requirements in Tier 1 and some additional mandatory requirements from Tier 3. The exact Tier 3 Requirements to be met, and the timeline for compliance, will depend on the nature of the investment and the circumstances of the organisation. Investments falling into Tier 2 are likely to be in the region of £250k - £1m

**Tier 1** represents the minimum level of mandatory governance Requirements in this Code. The Requirements in this Tier seek to ensure the protection of public funding through good governance processes, whilst not creating a disproportionate administrative burden. All organisations seeking funding will need to meet at least the basic governance Requirements of Tier 1. Sport England and UK Sport will generally categorise an investment as Tier 1 if:

I) it is granted on a one-off basis (for example, for a specific project which has a finite life); and

II) the total amount of funding is less than or equal to £250k.

**About Sport England**

Sport England is a public body and invests up to £300 million National Lottery and government money each year in projects and programmes that help people get active and play sport.

It wants everyone in England, regardless of age, background, or level of ability, to feel able to engage in sport and physical activity. That’s why a lot of its work is specifically focused on helping people who do no, or very little, physical activity and groups who are typically less active - like women, disabled people and people on lower incomes.

**About UK Sport**

UK Sport is the UK’s trusted high-performance experts, powering our greatest athletes, teams, sports and events to achieve positive success. Established in 1997, UK Sport has transformed the high-performance sporting system in the UK – through strategic leadership and investment of National Lottery and Government funds – winning more Olympic and Paralympic medals than ever before and is recognised as one of the top nations in the world for event hosting capabilities. UK Sport’s purpose is to lead high-performance sport to enable extraordinary moments that enrich lives and aims to work collaboratively with partners to deliver the greatest decade of extraordinary moments; reaching, inspiring and uniting the nation.

More @ [www.uksport.gov.uk](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/ZyM9CgJ5DcAGyMRfozoSk?domain=uksport.gov.uk/)

1. 7.89% BAME and 4.87% ‘other’. Included as an option choice a part of the Diversity in Sport Governance Survey, ‘other’ could include people from a ‘white’ background who did not identify with a specific option choice (e.g. White British). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)