

Government to develop new protocols around concussion in sport

- New protocols to be developed in partnership with medical experts and sports governing bodies
- A concussion research forum will be formed to address knowledge gaps
- Tech companies brought together to develop solutions for monitoring impact

The plan sets out steps that will be taken to improve understanding, awareness, prevention and treatment of concussion in sport in grassroots, educational and elite settings. This will be through a combination of improved research and the use of new technologies.

These include creating new protocols for sporting bodies, convening a research forum and bringing together tech companies to find new technological solutions designed to mitigate both the effects of concussion in sport and instances of it happening.

This comes as part of a response to the DCMS Select Committee Inquiry into concussion in sport, published in July 2021, which included recommendations for the Government.

Participation in sport and physical activity provides significant mental health and wellbeing benefits for people including reducing their risk of developing dementia in later life. Being active has been shown to help prevent or lower the risk of health conditions like stroke, heart disease, cancer and depression and can help reduce pressure on the NHS in the longer term.

However, in recent years there has been an increased focus on the negative health impacts from brain injury and concussion sustained while playing sport. This is due to advances in training, coaching, equipment and technology which have resulted in stronger, faster, better-trained players across all sports and at all levels.

As part of the Action Plan on Concussion, the Government will:

- Work with UK Sport, Sport England, the Devolved Administrations, sports governing bodies, player associations and schools to commission a single set of shared protocols – around concussion in sport across the UK to build on the work already done both domestically and internationally.
- The protocols will seek to include UK-wide agreement on issues such as how to recognise signs of head injury on and off the field, rules around removal from play and immediate actions to be taken in the event of head injuries.

- Require sports governing bodies to work closely with Player Associations on training protocols to improve players' long-term welfare.
- Convene a sports concussion research forum in partnership with the Medical Research Council to bring together sports and academics to identify and fill gaps in research for the sector.
- As part of the forum, the Government and sports concussion charity Love of the Game will also work to identify technology that could mitigate concussion in sport with practical improvements for players being introduced by autumn 2022. A recent joint 'hackathon' has already produced potential solutions, being demonstrated at a Demo Day today in London.
- Address lack of data on the subject by supporting a world-leading research project by the University of Oxford, in partnership with sport concussion charity Podium Analytics. This will be the first project of its kind to look at incidences of concussions in general and in sport in this country as well as prevalence by individual sports, age and gender.
- Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston will write to UK Sport and Sport England to ensure funded bodies successfully implement the new protocols once developed.

Ministers will also aim to convene a roundtable in the weeks to come with tech companies. This will look at developing solutions to the technological and practical challenges around preventing and measuring head impacts that could aid player safety, such as mouthguard technology and portable brain scanning systems.

In partnership with the Government's [independent concussion advisor](#) Laurence Geller, links will be strengthened so concussion in sport injuries are treated more effectively through NHS treatment pathways and the safety of players in all sports and of all levels, genders and ages is improved by June 2022.

Other government actions include working with Premier League clubs from early 2022 on a pilot scheme for player welfare to make sure considerations around concussion are embedded within organisations' governance.

Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston said:

Sport brings so many physical and mental health benefits to our lives. However player safety must be absolutely paramount. Working with the sports industry it is right that we do all we can to ensure that people are as protected as possible and the risk of head injuries are minimised.

That's why we're taking steps to reduce this risk and developing new, gold-standard industry protocols and focusing on emerging tech that can help build a fuller picture of the risks involved.

Laurence Geller CBE, UK government independent concussion advisor and chairman of Love of the Game said:

All of us recognise the importance of sport in our lives. Whether professional or amateur, whatever age or skill level, we want to enjoy our sports whilst being protected from the potentially life changing impacts of head injuries; I therefore warmly welcome the work Government is doing to prevent and treat concussion in sport.

By making the game safer, we make the game better for everyone. But it's not about changing the rules: it's about working with experts from the medical profession, science and technology to devise protocols, knowledge, and equipment to allow us all to continue playing the sports we love.

I am pleased to have been able to work with the Government to capitalise on the momentum that is already building to tackle this important national issue. And I'm proud of the work Love of the Game has done in this field which includes encouraging the development of new technologies which will serve sports people of all ages and levels.

Simon Shaw MBE, Love of the Game Campaign President said:

As a former sportsperson competing at the highest level on the international stage, I've seen the impact of head injuries on those around me – and felt it myself. It is great to see positive steps being taken to tackle concussion in sport to help reduce risks associated with head injuries. As Co-founder of Love of the Game, we are really pleased to be working with Government to identify technology that could mitigate concussion in sport and excited to be showcasing some of the technology at our Demo Day later this afternoon in London.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

- The Select Committee [published its report](#) and recommendations in July 2021, and the Government has responded to the Committee's findings and recommendations throughout this report.
- Laurence Geller MBE [was appointed](#) as Ministerial Advisor on Concussion

in Sport earlier this year.