

Speech: Tracey Crouch outlines aims and successes of Sport Strategy at UKActive Conference

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak at this year's summit, which from looking at the agenda will be an interesting and thought-provoking event.

I'm especially delighted to see the focus on the positive impact sport and physical activity have on wider society.

As I am sure I don't need to tell you, physical activity brings a number of benefits.

Firstly it can transform people's lives. And secondly it can strengthen both communities and the economy.

Furthermore, as ukactive set out in their "Manifesto for an Active Britain", published in May, physical inactivity costs the UK an estimated £20bn and causes 37,000 deaths every year.

And we can see from the two reports ukactive has launched today – 'Physical Activity – A Social Solution' and 'Moving More, Ageing More' – public leisure provides a vital contribution.

Our sports strategy Sporting Future, published almost two years ago, stressed the importance of getting the inactive active and set out a new vision for a successful and active sporting nation.

It marked a big shift in the way we think about promoting, supporting and investing in sport and physical activity. It emphasised that we as a government, and a country, need to think more broadly about the benefits that getting active can bring.

The strategy encourages relevant departments to work closer together to create a more physically active nation, where children and young people enjoy the best sporting opportunities available and people of all ages and backgrounds can enjoy the benefits that sport and physical activity can provide, at every stage in their lives.

We have committed to investing in and supporting sport and physical activity, not simply on the basis of the number of people taking part, but because of the wider value it has for us as individuals and society.

We set out 5 key outcomes that we want to strive towards and that we want to see delivered in return for government support and investment: *physical wellbeing; *mental wellbeing; *individual development; *social and community development; and *economic development.

I'm committed to making sure that these outcomes drive everything we do, and I'm pleased with how the sport and physical activity sector has responded to the challenge so far.

On physical wellbeing Sport England, in their latest strategy, has committed to spending at least a quarter of its total budget on tackling inactivity.

As part of this, they will invest up to £130 million in 10 places across England to trial new and innovative ways of achieving a sustained increase in participation in sport and physical activity.

Sport England will be devoting much of its focus to supporting those groups who have been traditionally underrepresented to get more active.

For example, their Active Ageing Fund will invest up to £10 million into projects that help inactive older people get active.

Their Tackling Inactivity and Economic Disadvantage Fund is investing £3 million to support inactive people from lower socio-economic groups.

And their Tackling Inactivity in Colleges programme will invest £5 million in 49 colleges across England to support their students to be more active.

We've sought to tackle what people often feel is an artificial distinction between sport and physical activity.

We've extended Sport England's role to cover certain types of physical activity to help make this a reality. An example of this is cycling for travel which Sport England didn't used to measure but now do.

What matters is that people are getting active in a way that suits them and that makes them more likely to continue being active in future.

Also Sport England's remit has been extended so that it is now responsible for supporting children aged 5 years and up with their physical activity outside school.

And Sport England's Active Lives Survey seeks to capture information on how active people are overall in their lives, instead of purely in a sporting context.

It's a big improvement on the previous Active People Survey, and will help us understand people's behaviour better, and the barriers they face to getting active.

The first set of results from the survey came through in January this year. They tell us that, while over 60% of adults are meeting the Chief Medical Officer's guidelines on physical activity, over a quarter are currently inactive.

We want to continue to see these figures improve and to encourage those that are currently inactive to take up physical activity.

It's exactly this 25% of people that we have to reach and to nudge towards a more active lifestyle. We know that by supporting these people there are huge benefits to be gained – not only for the individuals themselves, but for wider society.

We also said in Sporting Future that government would be more joined up in its approach to sport and physical activity. We are bringing together ministers in an Inter-Ministerial Group on Healthy Living to help with this.

For the first time this will bring together a range of government departments, including the Department of Health, Department for Education, Department for Transport and Department for Work and Pensions, to look at how sport and physical activity can be made more widely accessible so that it benefits everyone.

We know that collaborative working happens organically in sport, with projects that encompass health, business, community cohesion and economic growth to name just a few. We need to help create more opportunities for this to happen.

And the fact that three Ministers are speaking today is evidence of the cross government commitment to driving this agenda forward.

Mental wellbeing, the second outcome we are aiming to achieve with our strategy, is just as important as physical wellbeing. We are working closely with the Department of Health to explore how sport can improve its offer of mental health support.

I recently hosted two roundtables, one for athletes co-hosted by the Minister for Care and Mental Health, and the other for sports and mental health organisations, to agree an action plan for future work in this area.

This is something that I am passionate about, and I am determined that sport should lead the way in breaking down stigma and raising awareness of mental health issues.

Duty of Care in sport has been another big priority. Baroness Grey-Thompson recently published her Duty of Care in Sport review, which made a number of recommendations about welfare and wellbeing of sports participants.

I am extremely grateful for Baroness Grey-Thompson's hard work and I welcome the contribution her report makes to the debate about the welfare of participants in sport at all levels. This has to be a high priority for the sport sector.

I am considering the recommendations from the report in detail and am working with colleagues across government to look at what more government can do to support this agenda.

In terms of the third and fourth outcomes of our strategy, the impact sport and physical activity can have on individual and community development is significant. I have seen the results of this first hand.

I recently visited a project in Milton Keynes called MK SNAP, which is using sport and physical activity to help those with learning difficulties. Activities like yoga and gardening are really making a difference to improve the quality of the participants' lives.

I also had a tour of facilities at Sir Herbert Leon Academy, a mixed comprehensive in Bletchley. I got to engage with school children during a P.E. lesson to learn about how a swimming pool can support a range of people, including, different faith groups.

I have visited Active Norfolk's Mobile Me project focusing on over 65s. It is designed to address barriers to participation identified by this age group, and take physical activity interventions into sheltered housing and residential care homes.

I also attended the opening of new designated parkour site in school in West London. Earlier this year the UK became the first country to formally recognise Parkour, or free-running as it's sometimes known, as a sport. I'm delighted to see how this activity continues to grow its reach.

I've also been to Crawley Old Girls, a female football development group organised by The Crawley Town Community Foundation and the Football League Trust Female Football Development Programme.

Weekly sessions are held for women aged 40 and over, who have an interest and passion for football and who may not have had the opportunity to participate before.

And in Worcester I met Disability Sport Worcester, who specialise in creating and running sporting events, clubs and activities for children and adults with disabilities.

And so we know there is some good work going on locally to demonstrate the impact of sport and physical activity.

Of course, sport is also a significant contributor to the UK economy – and economic impact is the fifth of our key outcomes I referred to earlier.

In the UK, sport was valued at £35 billion in terms of GVA in 2015.

And as well as major events, grassroots sport contributes hugely too. People who follow sporting trends and buy the latest gear or purchase gym memberships also play their part.

It is important that we continue to build and capitalise on the economic growth of the sector.

A Sports Business Council has now been established which met for the first time in June. It brings government and leading sport sector organisations together to ensure the sector continues to grow and prosper.

Initial areas for focus are: *Intellectual property *Event staging *Skills *and developing the sport economy evidence base.

A representative of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy also attends the Council. I would like to thank Steve Ward from ukactive for agreeing to join the Council and chair its skills working group.

However, there is still some work to do in order to fully implement all of the actions set out in Sporting Future.

For example, we remain committed to establishing a network of employers in line with the recommendation set out in Sporting Future.

We are working with Department of Health and Department for Work and Pensions to move this forward, and hope to be able to make an announcement on this shortly.

The role of employers is vital in encouraging employees to be physically active. It isn't something that employers should see as just a benefit to their staff, as it is of course a benefit to them too. It brings greater levels of staff engagement and commitment to the organisation.

We are already seeing this for ourselves through the take up of our civil service workplace challenge. This is starting to have a real impact. It allows departments and workplaces involved to set up challenges, track progress and compete against each other.

With people spending so much of their day at work, it is vital that employers play a part in helping people to be active.

Another commitment in Sporting Future was to strengthen the sector by introducing a new Code for Sports Governance.

This is now in place. It will help to ensure that organisations receiving public funding are held to the highest standards of governance and conduct.

We've already seen big improvements to the governance of the national governing bodies of sport, and some big steps forward on diversity of leadership and board and council term limits.

The deadline for organisations receiving public money to comply with the Code was yesterday.

I know that Sport England and UK Sport are now working hard to assess the information they have received, and to make important decisions on compliance.

So much has already been achieved – and I'm proud of the efforts that we and the sector have already made. But of course there's much still to do.

I want to see the Code fully embedded, with organisations that we invest in continuing to strive for the highest standards, improving their diversity and decision making.

Looking ahead, I'm looking forward to seeing the sector build on this progress in the coming months and am counting on its support to help to make

the UK an exemplar for good sports governance.

But it is vital that we all do as much as possible to uphold the integrity of sport too. If sport's integrity is ever in doubt, the damage is considerable.

This is an area in which I feel the UK should continue to take the lead.

I've said it before, most recently at the Sports Betting Integrity Forum, and I'll say it again: Protecting the integrity of sport is of paramount importance.

If sport is corrupt, or sport is perceived as being corrupt, the public can very quickly lose faith.

If fans walk away, that is the end – the sponsors and the media would follow – so it is vital that we never underplay the importance of protecting sport's integrity.

By addressing the range of areas that present threats – of which doping is one – we can collectively mitigate those threats.

The Gambling Commission's Sports Betting Intelligence Unit works to ensure Britain maintains its reputation as a safe place for sports betting to take place, through protecting our betting markets and our consumers.

While I'm confident that this is a world leading regulatory system we need to make sure that we are able to assist and share our own industry best practice with other countries who may not even regulate gambling.

Education of the health impact of doping in sport is also an area that I feel strongly needs addressing.

That is why I was pleased to see that one of the recommendations in the recently published Review of the Criminalisation of Doping in Sport was for Image & Performance Enhancing Drugs to be integrated into drug information and education.

And, as has been highlighted several times over recent months, sports need to ensure they have robust whistle-blowing procedures in place and take appropriate action when people report concerns.

Turning to facilities, one of the main points that we made in our Sporting Future strategy was that the customer, and their experience of sport and physical activity, is absolutely vital.

One of the key determinants of whether or not someone will continue to take part in physical activity on a regular and enduring basis is whether they have an appealing, attractive, accessible space to do this in.

Baroness Grey-Thompson's call for a national network of Community Wellness Hubs that would co-locate community services with leisure facilities, speaks to this point.

I absolutely agree with the Baroness that we need to do more to support people to get more active, and am passionate about the role that physical activity and sport can play.

With partnership working, I am pleased to see that ukactive and Sport England are working closely together to deliver against Sporting Future, and are in the process of developing a Memorandum of Understanding to set out how they can best work together in future.

This MOU will strengthen the partnership between the two organisations across a range of priorities, to ensure an efficient approach to delivery and to maximise the impact of their investment.

I understand the aim is to have this formal partnership agreement in place by the end of 2017.

Finally, a brief word about Brexit. As we move closer to leaving the European Union in 2019, I am determined that the needs of the sport sector should be fully brought into government thinking around the challenges and opportunities our EU exit will bring.

My officials are working closely with representatives from the sport sector, including ukactive, to that end.

To conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to thank ukactive and everybody here today for the contribution you have made in implementing Sporting Future and improving the health of the nation.

I look forward to continuing to work closely with you.

Thank you for listening and enjoy the rest of the day.