

## Evaluating the Impact for Grassroots and Community Sport of Tanni Grey-Thompson's Duty of Care Report to DCMS

The Sports Think Tank hosted a *Chatham House* roundtable discussion on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2017 to evaluate the impact on grassroots and community sport of Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson's Duty of Care report. The report requires the sector to respond to the challenges it sets out and while much of the media focus has, rightly, been on elite athletes and player pathways, little has been said about the implications for community clubs, charities, foundations and NGBs. The Government has welcomed the report and while it will respond in due course, it will not issue a formal response.

At the roundtable, representatives from sports bodies delivering grassroots and community sport provision, national governing bodies (NGBs) and other experts discussed the implications and challenges for the sector with a view to providing an initial coordinated response towards the report's recommendations and how to approach their implementation. The roundtable addressed three themes:

- Whether the sector accepted the report's general thrust and recommendations.
- What the current assessment about the sectors current approach to duty of care.
- What would help move the sector towards the recommendations and what challenges might exist.

### Views about the Duty of Care in Sport report

- The report was broadly welcomed, especially its 'independence'.
- It has provided an important opportunity to assess duty of care across the sector rather than only focusing on a few high-profile NGB cases and provide a proportionate response.
- It also provided a unique opportunity to think maturely and develop a new standardised system. A sector-wide benchmark will also enable duty of care to be measured sustainably.
- The report was however, NGB focused - sport has an ever-increasing complex delivery system - and the reports three themes (1. Education and Standards 2. Governance 3. Athlete Pathways) were the responsibility of many different organisations.
- There was debate about whether the sector should self-regulate or create an 'Ofsted style' body: there was broad support for an ombudsman to provide independent accountability.
- Any ombudsman would need to be able to deal with the range of organisations, from the FA to goalball, and every organisation in between. Questions were raised about whether an ombudsman was realistic:
  - Would this be a newly funded body or cobbled together from existing resources?
  - What powers would they have?
  - What would it measure?
- There was support for the recommendation that any sporting organisation in receipt of public funding must have a nominated executive responsible for duty of care and safeguarding.
- The induction and duty of care charter recommendations were not covered in any detail.
- It was also noted if there were too many barriers to working in the sector at this level, there was a significant risk that the sector would be unable to attract desperately needed volunteers.

### Assessment of the current state of duty of care in the grassroots and community sports sector

- The preliminary findings of a small survey carried out across the sector for EduCare found:
  - While 75% of respondents said they have a senior manager or named board member responsible for duty of care, only 40% stated they have a Duty of Care Charter setting out how participants can expect to be treated and where they can go if they need advice, support and guidance.

- Furthermore, only 55% said that their SMT/Board discussed the recent Duty of Care in Sport report and considered the implications for their organisation.
- Only 35% of the organisations surveyed said they currently collect data about duty of care issues.
- 95% indicated they do not have any provisions for Sports Ombudsman or Sports Duty of Care Quality Commission.
- Only 25% of the organisations surveyed said they have financial support for duty of care training programmes.
- However, 75% said their coaches and volunteers at grassroots level undergo mandatory training to understand duty of care issues.
- 85% of those surveyed either strongly agree or agree that they would benefit from the support of an external provider of essential safeguarding and duty of care training.
- There was a strong feeling that the sector, as a whole, has prioritised doping rather than protecting young people.
- There was also a general feeling that the sector was potentially underselling itself: there are many volunteers and coaches doing the 'right thing' and more should be made of this best practice.
- Where a duty of care system existed, there is often a clear gap between the participant and the duty of care referral mechanism.
- There is also a significant issue with investigation: the sector does not have enough experienced and skilled people in and around sport to undertake high quality investigations into issues. Knowledge is so often limited that it paralyses organisations when dealing with duty of care issues leading to a failure in their duty of care process.
- While it was agreed that NGBs are highly regulated bodies, especially its workforce, currently the rules and regulations between NGBs and others organisations are not the same. The sector has not established what constitutes best practice and the system currently has over 80 different kite marks.
- Therefore defining what the minimum standard is would be crucial – what is our expectation of coaches etc delivering in the sector? – along with continued professional development.
- There are however, significant challenges to linking all the different standards and training together.
- There was also a particular concern about the growing numbers of coaches and practitioners working in an unregulated capacity – outside the NGB and associated system.
- Attendees also highlighted a common belief that while parents are animated about duty of care in schools for example, coaches and coaching programmes were seldom challenged on their duty of care credentials and associated obligations on athlete welfare. Parents prioritised cost and locality.
- In absence of demand for 'safe environments' from parents, there is little pressure on the sector to develop a stronger duty of care landscape.
- The sector could however, stimulate this by marketing its commitment to duty of care.
- A further challenge for the sector was its traditional transactional relationship with children and parents: duty of care required more a relational approach including ensuring mutual interest, a better understanding of the person and evaluating the relationship and how the provision feels.
- Attendees also reflected there were a plethora of external expertise that the sector does not take advantage of including Sport Resolutions, NSPCC and MacMillan.
- Attendees also thought the duty of care issues in this part of the sector were fixable but needed investment and coordination.

## Conclusions

- Attendees concluded that the sector itself should lead a cultural shift rather than be told what to do. They felt external accountability would be necessary, without becoming a 'tick box' exercise in order to access funding or to tear down the current system and start again.
- The best approach would be a top-down (leadership changes to inspire people to make the changes on the ground) and bottom-up (stories and best practice case studies).

- This can be achieved by creating a strong and robust model/system that has quality built into it. This framework should be developed from the consumer perspective - starting from the participant and working upwards.
- Any successful framework would need to include the entire landscape (not only for governing bodies), have a consistent approach and an agreed industry standard.
- Potentially the framework would need to include four key pillars:
  - Minimum standards
  - A sector wide code of conduct
  - Membership of a professional body that sets out industry standard for those working in the sector.
  - Commitment to ongoing Continued Professional Development
- Investing in an ombudsmen and a supporting system should also be considered alongside this.
- While the measurement of duty of care is paramount, a key question remains: it possible to create measurements that are hard enough to be accountable but soft enough to be relevant?
- Potentially a combination of quantitative and qualitative research that captures statistics, evidence but also customer experiences (could Active Lives Survey measure consumer experience?) might achieve this but needs further investigation.
- Qualitative research will be crucial to help give the sector an ongoing insight into whether the sports sector is moving in the right direction as a new system is developed.
- A conversation about what public funders will expect was required: this could then also be written into other contracts.
- Before any of this can happen the sector needs all the relevant information in one place so it can consider proportionate expectations, measurement and coordinate the way forward.

### **Next Steps**

- The Sports Think Tank will be hosting a second roundtable about duty of care at Loughborough University in December 2017. This will provide an opportunity to review the final findings from the recent survey and the roundtable's conclusions with a different group of stakeholders.
- Further exploring and assess the report recommendations with relevant experts in the sector and academics.
- Undertake a mapping exercise to consider how widely the sports sector should be accountable: sports leaks into many other sectors such as youth, leisure, and recreation.
- Undertake a mapping exercise about the duty of care practices, systems and models across the NGBs and other sector organisations delivering grassroots and community; collect stories to highlight best practice in the sector, or to highlight issues.
- Investigate and assess duty of care practices outside the sport sector.
- Explore with DCMS, Sport England etc about how they will be joining up the reports themes especially governance, standards and measurement requirements across a range of tools such as funding, surveys, research.
- An internal sector conversation about how to resource this work and one with Government about how this could be initially funded, with the sector.

### ***Sports Think Tank***

*October 2017*