

27 June 2019

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP and Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP and Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP

Many congratulations on making it through to the final two candidates for the Conservative Party leadership.

In a few weeks' time, one of you will take the office of Prime Minister. While there will be no shortage of issues vying for your attention, we are writing to urge you to make it a priority to tackle a trend which will have profound future consequences without urgent action.

### **The alarming decline in the wellbeing of children and young people in our country**

The health and wellbeing of a generation of young people across the UK is in decline. Government figures show that one in eight young people aged between five and nineteen has a mental health disorder, and one in three is overweight or obese by the time they leave primary school. At the same time, knife crime is growing in our communities and too many young people are lonely or lost. In recent years, pupils in the UK have consistently ranked among the least happy in the world.

It is no coincidence that this comes at a time when young people have never been less active. There is significant evidence to support the critical role of play, sport and physical education in increasing physical and mental health, developing character and life skills, improving cognitive performance, building social connectedness, and promoting social mobility.

Dealing with the symptoms alone not only misses the opportunity to address the root cause of many of these issues, but is allowing some of the potential solutions to be marginalised or underestimated. In state-funded English secondary schools, physical education has been cut by more than almost any other subject with over 51,000 hours of curriculum PE lost between 2010 and 2017. Meanwhile, the Chief Medical Officer's recommendation of 60 active minutes every day is achieved by just 18% of young people; and our own research has revealed only one in four parents is aware of the target.

### **The need for government action**

**We ask you to publicly pledge that tackling the decline in young people's overall wellbeing will be a key pillar of your programme for government, and that your government will set out bold, ambitious and measurable targets to harness the power of play, sport and physical education to ensure every child enjoys at least 60 active minutes a day.**



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While some of us have been pleased to contribute to the ongoing development of government's School Sport Action Plan, this alone will not be enough. It must form part of a broader cross-government strategy focussed on improving the health, happiness and life chances of young people.

This week thousands of schools, sporting organisations and charities have joined together for YST National School Sport Week to celebrate the power of sport and play to improve wellbeing. There is an appetite to do so much more.

In making it a priority to tackle the decline in young people's wellbeing, a government you lead would have the potential to make a meaningful, lasting and transformative impact on individual lives and the future of this country.

Yours sincerely



**Ali Oliver**  
**Chief Executive – Youth Sport Trust**

**Co-signatories:**

Baroness Sue Campbell, Director of Women's Football, The FA  
Steve Grainger MBE, Rugby Development Director, Rugby Football Union  
Sally Munday MBE, CEO, England Hockey  
Jo Adams, CEO, England Netball  
Adrian Christy, CEO, England Badminton  
Jane Nickerson, CEO, Swim England  
Jane Allen, CEO, British Gymnastics  
Chris Jones, CEO, England Athletics  
Laura Cordingley, CEO, Chance to Shine  
James Blake, CEO, YHA  
John Herriman, CEO, Greenhouse Sports  
Dr William Bird MBE, CEO and Founder, Intelligent Health  
Sir David Carter, Former National Schools Commissioner  
Dame Mo Brennan, CEO, Matrix Academy Trust  
Dawn Haywood, Deputy CEO, Windsor Academies Trust  
Peter Rubery, CEO, Fallibroome Multi Academy Trust  
Sue Williamson, CEO, SSAT  
Rosi Prescott, CEO, Central YMCA  
Alison Richard, Headteacher, Hertingfordbury Cowper Primary School

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Amy Joynes, Headteacher, Stanchester Academy  
Andrew Carry, Headteacher, St Joseph's RC Primary School  
Andrew O'Brien, Headteacher, Accrington Academy  
Andy Stones, Headteacher, William Farr CofE Comprehensive School  
Ben Levinson, Headteacher, Kensington Primary School  
Bernadette Wood, Headteacher, St Oswald's Catholic Primary School, Longton  
Billy Downie, Headteacher, The Streetly Academy  
Brian McNally, Headteacher, All Saints' Roman Catholic High School, Rossendale  
Chris Willan, Headteacher, Water Primary School  
David Bailey, Headteacher, Biddenham International School and Sports College  
Davan Bell, Headteacher, The Joseph Whitaker School  
David O'Farrell, Headteacher, St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School  
Denise Fountain, Headteacher, The Dame Ellen Pinsent School  
Derek Peaple, Headteacher, Park House School  
Desmond Callaghan, Headteacher, St Bede's Roman Catholic High School, Blackburn  
Euan Ferguso, Headteacher, Isleworth and Syon School for Boys  
Farhan Adam, Headteacher, Crown Hills Community College  
Garan Fay, Headteacher, St Michael's Catholic School  
Georgina Mulhall, Headteacher, Gomer Junior School  
Gillian Sparrow, Headteacher, Hillstone Primary School  
Helen Andrioli, Headteacher, Westcroft School  
Helen Longton, Headteacher, Carden Nursery and Primary School  
Ian Baxter, Headteacher, Awsworth Primary and Nursery School  
Ian Holmes, Headteacher, Thorner Church of England Primary School  
Iain Horner, Headteacher, Chesterton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School  
Ivan Gaughan, Headteacher, Holy Cross Catholic High School  
Jack Newton, Headteacher, Underhill School  
Jacqueline Mowart, Headteacher, Hareside Primary School  
James Pulle, Headteacher, Wilmslow High School  
James Topham, Headteacher, Wood Green Academy  
Jamie Jardine, Headteacher, The Heath School  
Jan Atkinson, Headteacher, Shooters Hill Sixth Form College  
Jonathan Heath, Headteacher, John Spence Community High School  
Jonathan Wilden, Headteacher, Folio Education Trust  
Julie Hazeldine, Headteacher, Flixton Girls School  
Julie Wright, Headteacher, Bedonwell Junior School  
Karl Rogerson, Headteacher, Billesley Primary School  
Katie Jennings, Headteacher, Mission Grove Primary School  
Kathryn Harper-Quinn, Headteacher, Hounslow Heath Infant and Nursery School  
Kevin Ford, Headteacher, Great Marlow School

Kim Webster, Headteacher, Clare Mount Specialist Sports College

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Laura Woods, Headteacher, Roger De Clare First CofE School

Leanne Symmonds, Headteacher, Ringwood School Academy

Len Batey, Headteacher, Barrowby Church of England Primary School

Len Hazlehurst, Headteacher, Straits Primary School

Lisa Fathers, Director of Teaching Schools, Alliance for Learning

Mark Avoth, Headteacher, The Bourne Academy

Martin McLeman, Headteacher, Queen Elizabeth's School

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Mican Hooper, Headteacher, West Heath Primary School

Michelle Walton, Headteacher, Brocks Hill Primary School

Neil McAvoy, Deputy Headteacher, Clavering Primary School

Neil Oldham, Headteacher, Highfurlong School

Neil Saunders, Deputy Headteacher, Micheal Syddall CofE Aided Primary School

Neville Beischer, Headteacher, Wright Robinson College

Nikki St.John, Headteacher, St Katharine's Church of England Primary School

Paul Dickinson, Headteacher, Archbishop Beck Catholic Sports College

Peter Bourton, Headteacher, Idsall School

Petan Gaul, Headteacher, The Hawthorne's Free School

Peter Mcquillen Strong, Headteacher, Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Richard Slade, Headteacher, Plumcroft Primary School

Ronald Skelton, Headteacher, Broadway Academy

Salan Brooks, Headteacher, Fulham College Boys' School

Sam Naismit, Headteacher, Flora Gardens Primary School

Sarah Rowe, Headteacher, Walton-on-Trent CofE School

Sharon Asquith, Headteacher, Ashton Community Science College

Sian Hall, Head of School, St Breock Primary School

Simon Ascroft, Headteacher, Biddulph High School

Simon Eccles, Headteacher, St Mary's Catholic Academy

Stephen Munday, Headteacher, Comberton Village College

Steve Tindall, Headteacher, Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Sue Ijewsky, Headteacher, Friars Academy

Tash Moriarty, Headteacher, The Harefield Academy

Toby Miller, Headteacher, St Peter's Catholic School

Vic Goddard, Headteacher, Passmores Academy

Wayne Randle, Headteacher, Mullion School

Yvoan Hewson, Headteacher, Bure Park Primary School