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## **PREMIER LEAGUE SUBMISSION TO EUROPEAN GREEN PAPER**

### **“Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases?”**

The English Premier League is one of the world's best known sporting competitions, with matches viewed by around 13 million spectators each season and seen on television in over 500 million homes in 195 countries. Off the field, the Premier League and its Clubs run a wide range of community programmes addressing a number of different policy issues and are one of the main partners in the Football Foundation, the UK's largest sports charity.

The Premier League believes that is very important to use the power of football to improve public health. At a national level we have been working with the Department of Health to increase the importance of sport being used as a preventative measure to improve health. Our clubs have also been working with their Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) at a local level to develop a wide range of impressive partnerships that address a number of different public health issues. The Premier League welcomes the Green Paper on health and physical activity and the opportunity to share best practice with other member states on addressing an important public policy issue.

### **In the field of nutrition and physical activity, which should be the key messages to give consumers, how and by whom should they be delivered?**

It is important that social marketing and education messages are delivered in a creative and marketable way, rather than simply from Government. Through successful programmes, such as Playing for Success which has improved literacy, numeracy and ICT skills by creating educational provision in classrooms based at football grounds, it has been shown that football and other sports can be used as a way of tackling exclusion. This approach, with suitable funding and support from a wide range of partners, could prove successful in improving public health.

It is also important that health promotion messages reach those in disadvantaged areas. For example, the Premier League is currently working in partnership with the Metropolitan Police, Football Association, Football League and Football Foundation to create a social inclusion programme called Kickz that will provide personal development opportunities through football for adolescents on estates in disadvantaged areas of London. The project will work closely with local authorities in providing the chance for young people to participate in physical activity. By working with local authorities Kickz will aim to work with key local agencies to address public health issues.

### **What is good practice for the provision of physical activity in schools on a regular basis?**

In order to inspire not just those who have the potential to become elite athletes, but also inspire those who simply want to be physically active for personal enjoyment, the provision of good quality coaching in schools is vitally important. Football clubs can play a role in supplying coaching provision, where the teaching staff are not capable of delivery at a suitable standard.

It is also important that schools do not focus on one type of sporting activity, but have a more inclusive approach to provision. The power of a football club's brand in a local community, as well as the skills of their workforce, means that working with other partners they can not only deliver football coaching, but also other sport, dance and music provision.

European member states should look to share good practice, particularly around innovative approaches to physical activity. For example, Arsenal's Double Club project, which sees teachers dressed in Arsenal kit deliver literacy and numeracy classes, which are then followed up by equal time on physical activity, has been very successful at addressing health and education issues.

**How can the media, health services, civil society and relevant sectors of industry support health education efforts made by schools? What role can public-private partnerships play in this regard?**

Football can play an important role in supporting the work of schools, working alongside other agencies including Government. The development in the United Kingdom of Prepare, Plan and Assess in primary schools means that schools are increasingly turning to outside agencies, such as professional clubs, to provide sports provision in schools.

In an even more comprehensive programme, Middlesbrough Football Club, working in partnership with the local PCT, delivers a wide range of health partnerships including a comprehensive school based healthy living programme in 4 primary schools and a condensed programme in a further 25 Middlesbrough schools. With Football Foundation funding a similar project targets a further 35 primary schools in Redcar/Cleveland that is designed to improve health, fitness and nutrition.

**What measures, and at what level, are needed to ensure a stronger integration aiming at promoting healthy diets and physical activity into health services?**

Great progress has been made in the United Kingdom, following the recognition by the Chief Medical Officer and in subsequent Department of Health White Papers on the importance of physical activity, which has led to a change in emphasis to prevention rather than cure. However, the Premier League believes that the balance of spending across Europe stills need to recognise the importance of preventative action.

It is also important to take a holistic approach to public health, rather than simply considering healthy diets and physical activity as individual policy approaches. Working in partnership with the Department of Health, the Premier League have been developing four adolescent health pilot projects aimed at improving the ways that adolescents access health services. These will provide a one-stop centre for young people to be provided with information, advice and guidance on particular health needs.

**In which ways can public policies contribute to ensure that physical activity be “built into” daily routines?**

The Premier League welcomes the UK Government’s commitment to increasing participation levels of children and adult’s in physical activity, with a target of having 85% of children in England aged 5-16 spending a minimum of two hours each week on high quality PE and sport each week by 2008.

We believe that an approach to physical activity, particularly for children, should be built in across the day and welcome innovative approaches such as Bolton Wanderers’ breakfast club project, which provides football coaching before school and Manchester City’s Green Miles scheme which rewards children who walk or cycle to school.

There is also an important public policy role, to encourage physical activity amongst those who are excluded. For example, Middlesbrough run a Football First programme in partnership with their Primary Care Trust and local employment agencies that engages hard to reach adults and improves basic skills, encourages physical activity as well as increasing job prospects. This model has been extended to work with NEET (Not in Education and Training) and Pre-NEET children in the Tees Valley area.

To encourage physical activity it is important that investment goes into the creation of facilities in areas of most need. Through our partnership with the Football Association and Government, the Football Foundation has invested in projects worth over £365 million aimed at improving facilities and developing community and education projects.

**Are there issues not addressed in the present Green Paper which need consideration when looking at the European dimension of the promotion of diet, physical activity and health?**

The European Commission should consider looking at building, developing and funding the EU wide evidence base for how sport can play a role in improving physical activity and nutrition.

The Department of Health have been working to promote the role of sport in improving public health, through nine regional conferences. It would be interesting to see the European Commission create a forum for sharing best practice.

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