



More people
More active
More often

Dear Boris,

I'm writing to you today, alongside the main political party leaders in Westminster, to request that the following four policy calls be included in your manifesto ahead of the imminent general election.

I'm writing in my capacity as Chair of ukactive, and would welcome the opportunity for my team to work with your team to support your overall vision for health and wellbeing ahead of the next general election.

Physical activity is a golden thread with the potential to address a myriad of issues, including shaping the future health of children and young people, ensuring the health of the nation's workforce, tackling loneliness and supporting an ageing society, and providing deeper connections within communities.

Promoting the importance of physical activity is especially significant given the current crisis in public health. Physical inactivity is now the fourth greatest cause of disease and disability in the UK, causing one in every six deaths and costing the UK economy £20 billion annually.

Westminster requires greater energy and focus on addressing the role of physical activity in mitigating the national challenges currently facing us today. ukactive have identified four key areas that must be addressed in order to make a lasting impact on the health of the nation. This includes the **decline in our high streets and town centres**, the **deteriorating health of our children and young people**, the **increasingly sedentary nature of working life**, and the **growth of an ageing population**.

1. Regenerating the high street through physical activity

- The first half of 2019 saw almost twice as many store closures as openings, according to new figures from PwC. We know that declining high streets are associated with negative public health outcomes and social disconnection.
- Despite this challenging environment, the physical activity sector, which continues to grow year on year, has the potential to support health outcomes, community cohesion and drive much needed footfall to the high street. But its potential is stifled by archaic town planning regulations, which make it difficult for gyms and leisure providers to open new facilities.
- In light of this, I am urging the main political parties to commit to addressing high rates of retail vacancy on the high street by changing the restrictive aspects of the 'use class system' to encourage fitness and leisure operators to open on the high street and primary business centres at greater scale.

2. Opening schools as community hubs to support children and families

- Today's children are the least active generation ever, with just one in four boys and one in five girls in England achieving the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Physical inactivity continues to disproportionately affect families from lower socio-economic



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backgrounds, particularly during the school summer holiday period, where the lack of affordable activity offerings sees children lose up to 80% of their fitness levels.

- 39% of sports facilities in England sit behind school gates, but the majority of these are inaccessible over the summer holidays. ukactive pioneered a model to open school facilities as accessible and ready-to-use community hubs to engage children and their families in affordable and healthy activities.
- ukactive's Schools as Community Hubs model proposes subsidised kids clubs with nutritious food and physical activities led and delivered by experts from across the physical activity sector. **All main political parties should commit to taking this model to national scale, starting from next summer, and reaching over 6,500 school facilities by 2022.**

3. Improving accessibility to active travel and wider activity opportunities for the nation's workforce

- We know from historic research that our national office culture is affecting the health and wellbeing of millions, with office-based employees now spending up to three quarters of their day sat down, costing the UK economy £29 billion in workplace absenteeism every year.
- Supporting people to build activity into their daily schedule constitutes one of the most effective ways to mitigate the health risks associated with increasingly sedentary lifestyles.
- In light of this, **I am urging the main political parties to commit to expanding the Cycle to Work scheme to include a broader array of physical activity opportunities and accessories, including fitness trackers and gym memberships, and to commit to conducting a feasibility study with ukactive to explore how the fitness and leisure sector can strategically partner with active travel initiatives.**

4. Supporting older adults to access the health benefits of physical activity

- By 2030, the number of people in the UK aged 60 or over is estimated to increase to twenty million – up 31 per cent from today's figure of 15.3 million. The decline in health traditionally associated with growing older is closely tied to fitness and declining levels of physical activity.
- The physical activity sector has the power to reimagine ageing, with programmes and interventions – including aerobic exercise and strength training – that can complement healthcare. But new proposals for personalised health budgets and social prescribing must clearly signpost to experts within the physical activity sector, so that health professionals in the NHS can access the expertise and facilities of local community providers to support their patients.



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- **I am asking the main political parties that every recipient of long-term prescribed medication also receives an activity prescription providing guidance and support to increase their activity, and that any future green or white paper on social care makes prevention a key priority.**

I would be delighted to explore how ukactive can work with you and your team to develop these policies and progress our shared ambition for an active, healthy nation.

Please contact my colleague Charlotte Cuenot, charlottecuenot@ukactive.org.uk, if you have any further questions and to let us know your availability.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Grey-Thompson'.

Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson
Chair, ukactive