

22<sup>nd</sup> December 2020.

Janet Finch-Saunders MS

Chair, Petitions Committee.

Dear Ms Finch-Saunders

Re: Petition P-05-1037- Children Lockdown Training

Thank you for your letter asking for my views on the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sports and Tourism's most response to my petition.

I recognise the serious nature of the current situation but I ask that the Petition's committee considers the following points.

As Wales has recently been moved into Tier 4 restrictions unfortunately once again children are not permitted to take part in organised sport activities, even if they are outdoor activities. This differs considerably from the position in England's Tier 4 areas where outdoor sport activities for under 18s and people with disabilities are allowed to continue despite the restrictions.

I note that the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sports and Tourism states that "all future decisions will be made based on the data and the science". From the scientific articles that I have read it seems universally agreed that transmission of the virus (even the new strain) rarely takes place outdoors. Presumably that is why in England the distinction has been made between indoor and outdoor activities.

Many children have had repeated periods of self-isolation during this school term, during which time they have been unable to attend their sporting activities or even exercise outdoors. Now those children face a further indeterminate period of time where they will not be allowed to exercise.

The best defence that we as a nation have over this pandemic and any future pandemic is to be fit and strong with good lung capacity and cardiovascular health, it is therefore imperative that we allow children to continue to train during these winter months.

In my last reply I detailed the mental health benefits of sport that are well-recognised. Again, many of these children have not been socialising for weeks on end and an organised, safe outdoor activity will give them the mental lift that they so desperately need at this time and may save them having to resort to mental health services in the future.

Once again, the position in Wales is that Elite sport can continue, but sport for children cannot. While education is important, the risks of transmission inside a classroom of 30 children is far greater than the risk when taking part in organised, covid safe activities, particularly those that take place outside.

Throughout the pandemic, the Welsh government has distinguished between indoor and outdoor activities and it may make sense to do so with regard to children's activities now, as the UK government has done for Tier 4 areas in England.

I am heartened by the Deputy Minister's words that the Welsh Government "continue to do everything we can to ensure the phased return of sport can continue for all, including children". While I am hopeful that before too long, all activities for children can resume, in the meantime I ask that the

government, if necessary, differentiates between outdoor and indoor activities so that at least some training can continue and that in future, as with school, it is the last activity to be restricted.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs WP Brady LLB(Hons) Dip Solicitor