

# All-Party Parliamentary Group on Yoga in Society



## Minutes of the Meeting on Yoga in Sport

Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 5pm – Committee Room 10 – House of Parliament

### 1. Apologies

On this evening of multiple votes on migration, there were apologies from MPs and Peers for the necessity to enter and leave the meeting for divisions.

### 2. Welcome

- Those attending were welcomed by the Rt Hon. Ben Bradshaw and Heather Mason, Secretariat to the APPG. Heather introduced the meeting, structure and innovative work being done on yoga in sport that the APPG would be hearing about during the meeting.

### 3. Yoga in Sport

The APPG heard from the following speakers: -

- Joanna Fletcher, CEO of the YogoJo Foundation, and founder of Pitch Ready, explained how yoga could be integrated into rugby at the grass roots, particularly benefiting young people in their enjoyment of the sport, but also equipping them with life skills, such as breathing, mindfulness, and relaxation.
- Dr Stephen Behan, Assistant Professor, School of Health and Human Performance, Dublin City University. He set out the evidence for the benefits of physical activity and the barriers that can hinder participation. He stressed the importance of promoting good physical activity habits in children at school.
- Matthew Weaver KC spoke about participation in rugby and the challenge of promoting a competitive and enjoyable experience while also ensuring safety and avoiding injury. Yoga's role in flexibility, injury prevention, and recovery.
- Ryan Stuart, Director of Rugby at Sutton Coldfield RFC, spoke about his experiences of coaching rugby and the benefits of integrating yoga into a training regime.
- Geoff Fletcher, Chairman of Sutton Coldfield RFC, spoke about his experience of injuries in rugby, which forced his early retirement, and how yoga now supported him personally as well as benefitting the club and upscaling to others through the Pitch Ready programme.
- During the meeting video clips of well-known professional rugby players were shown testifying to the positive impact of yoga on their performance and wellbeing.
- The meeting heard from 9 youngsters of primary and secondary school age who gave moving and insightful testimony about their experiences of yoga, including: "It felt like I had a new body". MPs and Peers particularly thanked Jay, Ben, Jack, Jacob, Alfred,

Freddie, Will, Alfie, and Phoebe.

#### **4. Yoga4NHS Staff Wellbeing**

- Paul Fox, the CEO of the Yoga In Healthcare Alliance, brought those present up to date with the news that the Royal College of General Practitioners had – for the first time – accredited a staff wellbeing programme created and delivered by the YIHA charity. So far 170 staff had completed the 6-week Yoga4NHS staff wellbeing course, with 100% saying they would recommend it to colleagues.

#### **5. Yoga in Prisons**

- Geoff O’Meara from the Prisons Yoga Project spoke about current work in the UK bringing yoga to prisoners to achieve a range of benefits to them and the establishments they reside in. We also heard from one of Geoff’s colleagues about how physical training instructors in prisons had received training in yoga and how to take a trauma-informed approach.

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**The meeting finished at 7pm**

#### **List of Attendees**

- Mr Jonathan Lord MP
- Rt Hon Ben Bradshaw MP
- Lord Stone
- Mr Andrew Mitchell MP
- Lord Cromwell
- Baroness Healy
- Ms Heather Mason - Secretariat
- Ms Joanna Fletcher
- Mr Paul Fox - CEO of the Yoga in Healthcare Alliance