Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport

[redacted]
Minister for Sport, Tourism, Place and Digital
Government
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
1st Floor
100 Parliament Street
London SW1A 2BQ

[redacted]

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25 September 2026

Ms Alison Mutch
Senior Coroner for Greater Manchester (South)

[redacted]

[redacted]

Dear Ms Mutch,

Thank you for your correspondence of 4 August, to the Secretary of State for Education, the Rt Hon Lucy Powell MP, enclosing a copy of the Regulation 28 Prevention of Future Deaths Report, concerning Mr Norbert Peter Stiles.

Your letter has been referred to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), as the issues you raise fall primarily within its remit. I am replying as the DCMS Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on behalf of both DCMS and the Department for Education (DfE).

On behalf of both departments, I would like to start by offering my deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Mr. Stiles, and I recognise the ongoing challenges faced by former sportspeople living with neuro-degenerative diseases and the impact this has on their families.

The safety and wellbeing of everyone taking part in sport is paramount and I note the Matters of Concern raised in your report. I can assure you that mitigating the causes and effects of head injuries in sport is a priority of this government.

National Governing Bodies, such as The Football Association (The FA), are responsible for the regulation of their respective sports, including ensuring that measures are in place to protect participants from harm. My response will cover the work that the government is doing on this issue as I am aware this report has also been sent to the Chief Executive of the FA.

The Department for Education recognises the importance of ensuring that football is delivered in schools safely, appropriately and in line with the best available evidence. Schools are expected to deliver football in accordance with FA rules and guidance, including current restrictions on heading and wider player-welfare requirements. For example, the phased removal of deliberate heading in affiliated football for children aged under 7 to under 11.

Further to this, through the new PE and School Sport Partnerships approach, the government will strengthen collaboration between schools, National Governing Bodies, and sector partners to support the safe delivery of sport. This will help children continue to benefit from football while reducing unnecessary exposure to head impacts and promoting player welfare.

POSITIVE ABOUT DISABLED PEOPLE

In 2023, The Department for Culture, Media and Sport published the UK Concussion Guidelines for Grassroots Sport in conjunction with the Sport and Recreation Alliance. These landmark, UK-wide guidelines were developed by an independent drafting group of leading UK and international experts, and provide a consistent, evidence-based approach for immediate management of suspected concussion. They include the strapline: 'if in doubt, sit them out', advising immediate removal from play if a suspected concussion has occurred. These guidelines are reflected in The FA's official Concussion Guidelines. The DfE also supports the UK-wide guidelines and is committed to promoting awareness across schools of the identification, management and prevention of concussion.

We are also working to integrate sports safety into government action on acquired brain injury (ABI). Department of Health and Social Care ministers are currently considering next steps on ABI to ensure that the diverse causes and impacts of ABI, including sport-related injury, are addressed.

Beyond preventative measures, DCMS is committed to ensuring former players with neurodegenerative diseases, and their families, receive the support they need. The Secretary of State for Culture and I have met with affected family members and ex-footballers, to discuss player safety and welfare for those suffering from neurodegenerative diseases. We heard first-hand about players' experiences and the views of the group on how safety and welfare at all levels of the sport could be improved. Lastly, the government has asked the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council to look at whether dementia in footballers should be classed as an industrial injury.

Thank you again for your important contribution to this crucial issue. We remain committed to working with the sports sector to help ensure the safety of all participants in sport.

Yours sincerely,

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Minister for Sport, Tourism, Place and Digital Government