

# ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH:

A Tool for Developing Healthy and  
Thriving Sports Organisations

Updated May 2024



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**“The probability of success at all levels is enhanced by having excellent organisational health.”**

NGB Organisational Health Working Group, 2023



## Introduction

**For sport to continue to thrive in the UK, it is essential that sports bodies are effective and sustainable organisations.**

The world of sport and wider society are changing at a faster rate than ever before. As such, sports organisations must contend with a growing range of major challenges in order to survive and grow. Examples include increased financial pressures, greater regulatory responsibilities, and advances in technology. Many National Governing Bodies (NGBs) are also dealing with increased competition and fragmentation both from within and outside of their sport, as well as grappling with maintaining or building reach and relevance as the needs of fans, participants and athletes constantly evolve.

In the face of this uncertain and complex landscape, it has become ever more vital that sports bodies are able to exhibit organisational excellence and resilience across a multitude of areas. We believe this is integral not only to the long-term health of sport, but also to delivering high-performance success on and off the field of play.

As a result, one of the priorities set out in UK Sport's 2021-31 Strategic Plan is to build long-term organisational health across sports and the wider sector.

In September 2022, UK Sport introduced the 'Organisational Health Tool' – our first, comprehensive step to better understand the health of NGBs and how we can best support them to be well-run, effective and sustainable organisations, operating within a connected and thriving sporting system.

We always envisaged this being an evolving process. As a result, in collaboration with a group of NGBs and as part of our work looking at future reform of the system, we have developed a next version of the Tool. This includes a diagnostic tool designed to help sports bodies to review their own organisational health and identify opportunities for development.

The tool consists of three thematic areas, which we believe underpin great Organisational Health:

**Strategy and Purpose** (What we're here to do and Why)

**People and Culture** (Who's going to do it)

**Operations and Governance** (How we're going to do it)

Each of these areas is divided into a number of components. These components are not independent of one another but as a whole, they will help NGBs and other organisations to not only sustain but also transform themselves into high-performing sporting enterprises.

## The Tool is designed to be used in a number of ways:

- **As a support and self-reflective tool** to help sports bodies better understand their own organisational health, in order to identify areas for improvement, and develop greater resilience.
- **To help UK Sport build a cohesive picture** of each funded NGB through regular and trusted engagement, as well as the systematic collation and review of relevant data and insights linked to each of the components. This will shape our continuous understanding of organisational issues and developments impacting our funded partners; our ability to identify and react to trends, opportunities and risks across the system; and the type of advice and support we provide to individual organisations and across the system.
- **To inform bespoke development programmes or funding** that UK Sport will provide to NGBs to strengthen the health of their organisation. To deliver this, we will collaborate closely with our funded partners and the Home Country Sports Councils to ensure efficient and effective use of resources and share learnings that are beneficial across the sporting community.

The Tool has been developed by UK Sport, in collaboration with various partners. It is intended to be for – and used by – sports bodies, UK Sport and other partners. It is purposely agile, in order to be adapted and evolve over time to ensure it remains relevant and valuable to sport.

**Notably, the Tool is not a list of requirements for partners in receipt of funding from UK Sport to comply with but designed to support the development of sporting bodies.** It is built on a collective understanding of the components that should help make sports bodies more sustainable and successful in this complex landscape. The indicators of excellence for each of the components are listed as examples (rather than a definitive list) and some duplicate or overlap across different areas, given how interconnected many of these are.

UK Sport is determined to engage and work collaboratively with partners to support their continuous improvement and transformation. We are therefore excited to work with you in using the Tool; to see how it benefits the sporting community and how it can be improved; and ensure it plays its part in helping us all grow a system which is healthy and thriving – for the good of sport and society.

**UK Sport – Sporting System Team, May 2024**



# STRATEGY AND PURPOSE



## Strategy and Purpose

### Vision and Strategy

**Long-term vision and strategic plan for the organisation and wider sport – insight and data-led, regularly monitored, fit for the future, and supported by the communities which it represents.**

Clarity of purpose, a long-term vision and tangible milestones are vital to ensure clear direction for any organisation, its workforce and the wider community that it works within.

Within sport, many organisations have extensive histories and responsibilities which stretch beyond their direct control. Therefore knowing why we are here, where we are trying to go and how we relate to others will be crucial to making progress in the right direction.

Understanding and tracking this progress in an appropriate manner is critical to knowing whether we are having the intended impact in the right areas and allows for course correction if we are not.

### Indicators of excellence:

- The organisation has published a fit for purpose, fit for future strategy linked to a strong organisational mission, identity and values, informed by good quality data and insight.
- The Board and Senior Leadership take direct ownership of the strategy including regularly monitoring impact and achievement of goals, whilst reviewing and planning for the future.
- The organisation's strategy is flexible enough to adjust and respond to insight including unforeseen challenges and opportunities whilst staying true to the overarching mission.
- Relevant systems, processes and resources are in place to support the effective planning, project management, delivery and monitoring of the strategy.
- The people within the organisation have a strong understanding of the strategy and how it relates to their work.



## Strategy and Purpose

### Alignment and Influence

**A well connected, integrated, strategically aligned organisation with strong partnerships locally, nationally and internationally, that support and enhance the key components of the strategy, as well as the sustainability and growth of the sport.**

Working in collaboration with key local, national and international partners is vital if sports bodies are going to make real headway in tackling the big issues and challenges across their respective sports, and within our sporting system.

Collectively, we can have a much bigger impact and make better use of our limited resources, so we should challenge ourselves to think differently and develop new and different partners. Our organisations should play effective connecting roles at the centre of the sporting system, working in partnership to widen our collective reach and impact.

### Indicators of excellence:

- Board and Senior Leadership have a strong understanding of the wider sporting, commercial and political environment in which they operate and can respond and act appropriately.
- The organisation has an excellent cross-sport strategy with strong engagement and alignment across grassroots, national and international sport, and across the home nations.
- The organisation's programmes (e.g. major events, high performance talent pathway, participation) are fully integrated into its strategy, operations and organisational culture, maximising the benefits for the sport.
- Clear stakeholder management plans are in place which allows excellent, collaborative relationships to be built and maintained. These relationships are valuable to both parties and are built on a common purpose and strong strategic alignment.
- Excellent relationships are maintained with European and International Federations and supported by strong succession planning, which allows for effective influencing and ensures strategic objectives are achieved internationally.



## Strategy and Purpose

### Growth and Innovation

**Sports organisations with commercial acumen, entrepreneurial mindset and digital maturity – using data and insights to inform and deliver innovation and growth.**

Growth in sport doesn't just happen by accident. There are many factors that fall within and outside of our control which make growth more likely. To make the most of these opportunities, it is important to be insight-led, agile and responsive to change – cultivating a curious and innovative culture and developing solutions with an outcome in mind.

In today's rapidly changing landscape it's more important than ever for sports organisations to possess excellent digital capabilities to capitalise on growth and innovation opportunities, ensuring seamless engagement with participants, members and fans, as well as optimising athlete performance, and maximising revenue streams.

### Indicators of excellence:

- The organisation has excellent digital and data capabilities across all areas of the business, allowing it to optimise areas such as audience engagement, performance, and revenue streams.
- A learning organisation that makes use of data and insight (from inside and outside sport) in a sophisticated manner. This informs holistic and future-focused decision-making that maximises impact and is appropriate for the organisation and stakeholders.
- A developmental mindset is fostered within the organisation, with an appropriate appetite for risk which allows new opportunities to innovate to be sought out.
- There is a strong learning and development culture across the organisation with proactive solutions developed, and learning taken from the latest thinking. The organisation has the capability and capacity it needs to explore, secure and maximise strategic growth opportunities.

## Strategy and Purpose

### Environmental and Social Impact

#### **Harnessing the power and platform of sport to drive positive, meaningful, and lasting change for society and the planet.**

The issues facing society are becoming more pressing and complex, whether these are related to areas such as mental health, climate, social mobility or inequalities. Sport is just as affected by these shifts, and we must keep pace with the changing needs and nature of communities, sports, athletes, participants and fans.

The platform we share as a sporting community brings accountability to respond to these challenges to ensure sports' long-term viability and relevance. All of us have a responsibility to drive positive action and change through our operations and the assets we have available, (e.g. athletes, venues, major events, clubs, programmes etc). This is increasingly important to audiences, and it is vital that any social impact and environmental sustainability strategy is connected to the organisation's overall strategy and purpose.

Organisational impact is supported by strong monitoring and evaluation. This allows for consistent and continuous improvement to power positive change.

#### **Indicators of excellence:**

- The organisation understands its role in delivering social impacts that are relevant and authentic to its sport. It understands its negative environmental impacts, how they can be reduced, and where positive action can be taken. These are factored into decision-making with clarity over where the greatest impact is.
- Social impact and environmental sustainability strategies or action plans have been developed and form a key part of the overall organisational strategy, with clearly identified roles and responsibilities.
- Clarity exists over proportionate yet stretching targets and the organisation tracks and publishes progress and impact - regularly measuring and evaluating outcomes, as well as learning and developing as required.
- Implementation is well resourced, supported by strong and diverse partnerships, and the organisation regularly makes use of assets to amplify key messages, storytelling and shared learning with the wider sector.
- Ongoing education is provided on social impact and environmental sustainability, whilst staff and athletes are aware of their responsibilities in delivering strategies or action plans. The wider sport is supported in its understanding and role within this space.

# PEOPLE AND CULTURE



## People and Culture

### Leadership

**High quality, inclusive and trusted leadership, fully aligned with organisational purpose and values – with a positive tone set from the top.**

Strong, skilled and diverse leadership teams are an essential element of a high-performing sporting system. However, leadership is not confined to hierarchies. Inclusive, values-driven leadership behaviours should be seen across all levels.

Leaders in our sporting community should feel supported, able to develop and in turn able to lead in a strategic, impactful and inclusive manner. As organisations we are responsible for leading and creating an environment that allows people and sport to thrive.

### Indicators of excellence:

- There is high-quality leadership with an appropriate blend of expertise, diversity and skills to effectively lead the organisation on behalf of the community it represents.
- The Board and Senior Leadership are highly aligned and work effectively together, actively living and promoting the organisational purpose, values and culture.
- People feel valued and connected with their leaders, supported by quality and regular feedback. Change is consulted and implemented when needed based on active review of insight.
- Decision-making is guided by purpose and values and informed by insight and engagement with relevant experts. Therefore, leaders within the organisation can be confident in their decision-making and do not shy away from making bold responsive decisions, that deliver long-term impact.
- Future leaders are identified as part of succession planning, and leadership skills are actively cultivated and developed by the organisation.
- Individuals at all levels feel they are leaders in their own rights.

## People and Culture

### Culture

**Inclusive, supportive, values-driven and high-performing culture, that supports organisational purpose. Underpinned by systems knowledge, and people that embed and drive the highest standards of personal and organisational conduct and culture.**

Culture, trust and integrity are critical foundations for all organisations in sport and they need to be attended to intentionally. As a people system, it is incumbent on us to proactively develop cultures and behaviours within our organisations and sports that create inclusive, positive and welcoming environments.

**‘Winning well’** for instance requires the highest standards of ethical decision-making. This will not always be easy and so to achieve this, people need to feel empowered and supported. It is the responsibility of everyone involved to ensure that our working, playing and performance environments are structured and delivered appropriately, are inclusive, kind, supportive and fair, and that suitable, trustworthy mechanisms exist for raising concerns.

### Indicators of excellence:

- The organisation has a strong, inclusive culture supported by a clear and meaningful set of values and behaviours. These are championed and actioned throughout the organisation, with leaders setting the cultural intent.
- A culture of the highest standards of trust and integrity is promoted and lived across the organisation and sport, with appropriate support and development offers available to all.
- Attending to culture and integrity and understanding the experiences of the people involved are key concerns for the Board and senior leaders. Oversight and insight are maintained through appropriate and relevant assurance mechanisms.
- Organisational processes and policies contribute to fostering trust and the desired culture. This includes having clear and visible codes of conduct that are understood and lived.
- People are clear on their shared purpose, show good self-awareness, and are personally invested in building and maintaining healthy, high-performing cultures and environments which embrace continuous learning and development.

## People and Culture

### The People

**Highly skilled, experienced, diverse workforce fully engaged in the organisation's strategy and culture, empowered through dedicated talent identification, development programmes, networks and wellbeing.**

People are our greatest resource. To remain an influential, respected and world-leading sporting nation, we need to ensure that we attract, retain, support and develop the highest quality of people within our sports and our organisations, from a diverse range of backgrounds.

This isn't something which happens by accident. High-performing organisations are those which are intentional in their approach to their staff and are creative in their people planning. This starts with understanding the needs and experiences of our people and volunteers.

### Indicators of excellence:

- The organisation has a high-quality and holistic People Plan (or equivalent) in place. This enables appropriate planning, ensuring people feel highly valued, and are well supported both professionally and personally.
- The staffing structure is clearly aligned to the organisation's operating model, strategic purpose, priorities and business needs. There is a recruitment and talent management strategy in place that attracts, develops, retains and supports a diverse range of highly talented people.
- The organisation has access to excellent HR and People expertise and has policies and processes that are appropriate and allow for regular feedback from and to its people (which is acted upon).
- The organisation actively supports the development, as well as health and wellbeing of its people (both paid and unpaid), recognising their diverse needs and helping them to perform at their best.
- The organisation recognises and rewards those who are performing well, whilst ensuring it has appropriate mechanisms in place to effectively identify and address underperformance.

## People and Culture

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

**Inclusive organisations, which are accessible and prioritise diversity in their workforce, see performance benefits. High performing organisations are open to challenging themselves and being challenged. These organisations are fully committed to continuous improvement to make their organisation more representative of their sporting communities and wider society.**

It is well recognised that diverse organisations with inclusive cultures enjoy a performance advantage. They make more robust decisions, are more innovative and creative, and find it easier to attract and retain talent. They are also better equipped to serve a wide range of stakeholders, are more resilient, and better able to adapt to changing environments. An absence of diversity can be a performance limiting factor, and a symptom of wider cultural challenges within the organisation.

We all need to be able to think, talk and act confidently about inclusion in all areas of our work and to proactively seek different perspectives and diversity of thought. The people who will successfully lead in the sector will be those who are able to harness diversity, whilst being passionate, committed and active in driving change in this area.

#### Indicators of excellence:

- The Board and Senior Leadership recognise and believe in the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). This ensures that EDI is embedded in the organisation's everyday operations and workstreams and that policies and projects are developed to drive greater diversity.
- The organisation is inclusive and accountable through an ambitious Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (or similar), aligned to its strategy, and formally reviewed by the Board and updated at least annually.
- The organisation has a diverse Board, Senior Leadership, workforce, athlete cohort, fan and participation base and it knows this due to the strength of its insight gathering, including understanding of lived experiences.
- Leadership consistently displays inclusive working practices and behaviours.
- An employee engagement plan ensures organisation-wide understanding and awareness of EDI issues, and individual responsibilities. Relevant EDI training opportunities are available and regularly reviewed.
- Strategic communications routinely include EDI messages and senior leaders regularly advocate for EDI internally and externally.
- The organisation regularly checks and challenges EDI progress, and resources (including financial) is available to drive EDI initiatives.



# OPERATIONS AND GOVERNANCE



## Operations and Governance

### Communications and Engagement

**A trusted and relevant organisation – listening to and communicating effectively with various audiences across relevant channels – with the agility to meet changing societal needs.**

Organisations trusted to govern and administer their sport (or elements of it) are responsible for, and answerable to, the people and organisations within their networks.

It is therefore essential to have an advanced understanding of audiences to connect and communicate with them on their level, and to utilise a variety of communication mechanisms and platforms.

Communications and engagement will be used strategically and creatively to maximise the relevance of the sport to a wide diversity of people.

#### Indicators of excellence:

- The organisation has a clearly defined internal and external communications strategy, which is built on relevant research and insight. The strategy is implemented successfully enabling effective engagement – including listening and responding to audience needs.
- The organisation uses a variety of media to engage with a diverse range of audiences (athletes, participants, staff, volunteers, etc) in the most appropriate and accessible format for them, ensuring the content is of high quality and relevance.
- The organisation has strong media relations and the ability to project a coherent image that enhances its reputation.
- There is an excellent understanding of high-profile assets (e.g. major events, athletes, etc.) and how best to use/support them to amplify key messages and improve their sport and its relevance in society (e.g. social and environmental impact).
- Staff and volunteers are empowered to project the organisation's purpose and values to support cohesive messaging.

## Operations and Governance

### Governance

**Highest standards of corporate and sport governance with skilled and cohesive Boards and senior leadership teams, implementing, cascading and promoting best governance practice.**

Excellent governance helps organisations to establish transparency, accountability, and high standards of integrity, which are essential for maintaining stakeholder trust and credibility. The right governance structures, with decisions made at the right level, enables the best decisions to be made to drive the success of the organisation whilst contributing to the health and growth of the organisation and sport.

The **Code for Sports Governance** sets out the levels of transparency, diversity and inclusion, accountability and integrity for those organisations who seek – and are in receipt of – UK Government and National Lottery funding from UK Sport and/or Sport England.

Through frameworks such as the Code, and through cascading great governance, organisations should seek to strive for sector (or even world)-leading governance.

### Indicators of excellence:

- The organisation is fully compliant with the Code or relevant sport governance frameworks and regularly reviews and publishes details of its governance.
- The organisation has actively moved beyond compliance to driving continuous improvement and cascading a culture of good governance that enhances conduct and standards and creates safe and trusted environments.
- The organisation has strong and diverse Board, Committees, and Executive, each with appropriate skills, independence, expertise and a clear understanding of their roles to effectively lead and govern the organisation, in line with its strategy and purpose.
- There is a fully inclusive Board culture, with an excellent relationship between members as well as the Board and accountable officer and/or executive, which allows for quality and robust check-and-challenge of decision-making within a supportive and forwarding-thinking environment.
- There are effective and readily accessible policies, procedures and expertise to deal with all aspects of governing a sport, including legal, safeguarding and integrity matters. Examples include anti-doping, data protection whistle-blowing, bullying, harassment and discrimination.
- There is regular and effective oversight and review by the Board and Senior Leadership of key policies and processes.

## Operations and Governance

### Finance

#### **Systems and knowledge in place to embed and drive the highest standards of financial management.**

Sound financial planning and management are amongst the most important foundations of a highly effective organisation.

This requires robust financial policies, procedures and controls to be in place, but also extends to more strategic requirements, including long-term financial planning, a reserves policy and commercial and/or income strategy.

The Senior Leadership and Board must be able to demonstrate their involvement and oversight of the financial management of the organisation.

#### **Indicators of excellence:**

- The Senior Leadership and Board ensure their organisation is a going concern, have regular oversight of finances, and a long-term financial strategy linked to an overall strategic plan which enables them to make informed and sound financial decisions.
- The organisation can flex its financial planning and resources to adapt to external changes or challenges, and if course correction is required within strategic planning.
- The organisation has strong, comprehensive and up-to-date financial policies in place with annual external audits and best practice monitoring overseen by a Finance and Audit Committee.
- The organisation has a fit for purpose reserves policy which provides financial assurance and is adhered to.
- The organisation has a clear income strategy and effective relationships with funding bodies.
- The organisation has appropriate capacity (or access to capacity), training, and succession planning for key finance personnel.

## Operations and Governance

### Risk Management

**High-quality, regular and visible risk management across the organisation, underpinned by appropriate systems and knowledge.**

Effective risk management is a key aspect of a healthy, agile organisation allowing it to horizon-scan, mitigate for risk, and adjust course as necessary in an ever-changing landscape.

A risk management plan which is embedded throughout the organisation is essential for risks to be identified as early as possible, and for steps to be taken quickly to reduce any adverse impacts.

The Board and Senior Leadership (with support from relevant Committee or Group) must be able to demonstrate their involvement and regular scrutiny of the risk management plan.

#### Indicators of excellence:

- The Board and Senior Leadership have oversight of risk from across the business.
- The organisation has a clear, robust and appropriate risk management policy, which is kept up-to-date and reviewed regularly by the Board who fully understand their responsibilities.
- Risk is planned for, accounted for, and mitigated against as part of day-to-day business processes.
- All teams within the organisation are empowered to manage risk, innovate within their own area of the business, and feed into an overall risk management, and risk appetite process.
- Staff have access to, or the capacity and expertise required to address and manage key areas of risk (e.g. integrity, safeguarding, financial, succession, cyber security, etc.).
- The organisation provides access to ongoing prevention, education and training on key areas of risk (e.g. integrity, safeguarding, financial, succession, cyber security, etc.), whilst actively ensuring its staff, participants and athletes are aware of their responsibilities and of key policies.

# DIAGNOSING ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH



## Diagnostic Tool

**In collaboration with a group of National Governing Bodies, we have developed a Diagnostic Tool which you can use to diagnose the health of your organisation.**

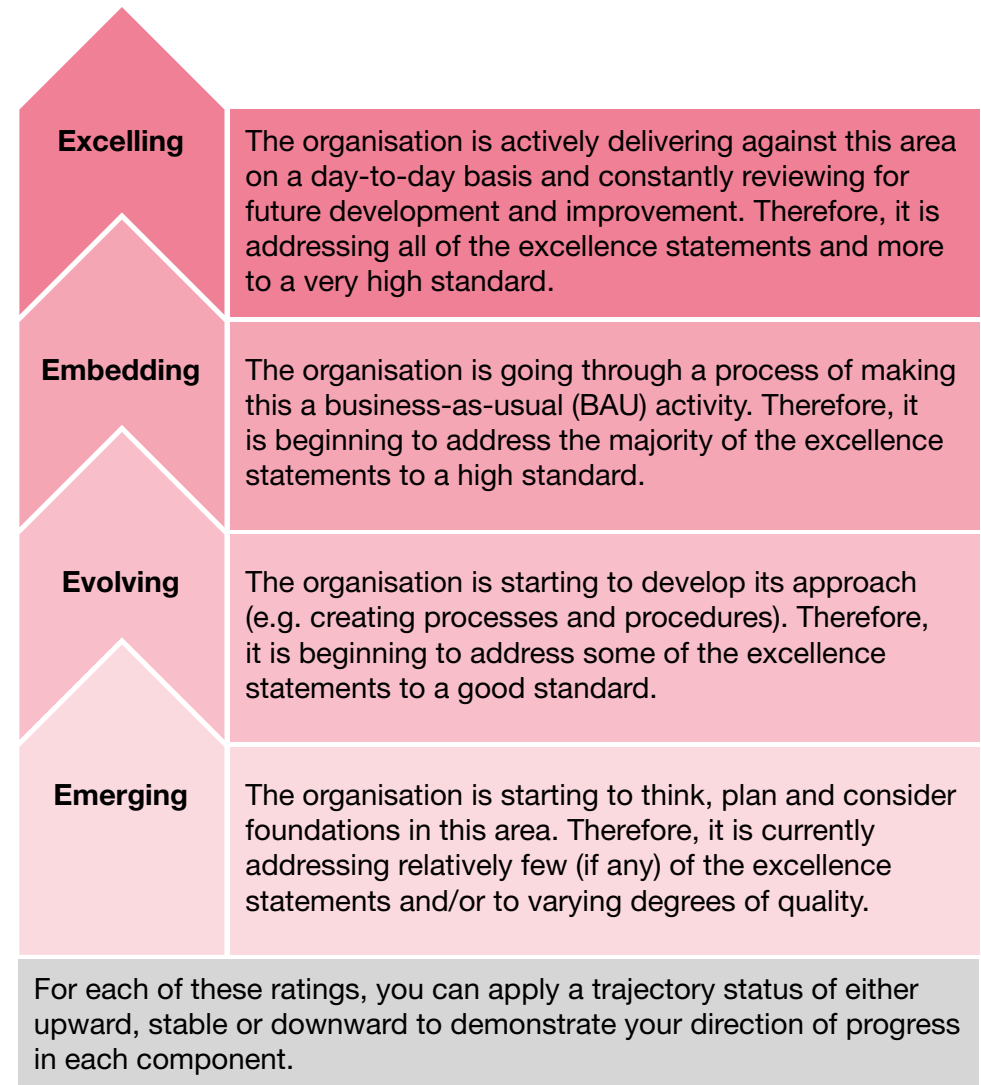
The diagnostic tool allows you to review each component of the Organisational Health Tool and attach a rating and a trajectory.

This then builds a picture of organisational health allowing you to identify strengths, weaknesses and development priorities

The diagnostic is designed to be a development tool. It is not a compliance exercise. It provides a framework for reflection and can be implemented in a number of ways, for example:

- As an off the shelf self-assessment tool to support the development of your organisation
- As part of a facilitated collaborative group session
- As a compare and contrast exercise between two or more groups
- As a desk-based exercise
- Or any combination of the above

If you are a UK Sport-funded sport/NGB and are interested in running a diagnostic session, please speak to your Advisor.





## Testimonials

“

*We found the Organisational Health Diagnostic Tool very helpful indeed in holding a structured conversation within our senior team and beyond to calibrate how we are doing and what our priorities should be.*

*It was very appealing to have such a clearly structured approach that combined a quick visualisation as well as narrative.*

*When colleagues had points to make, the general approach enabled us to get to the root of major issues represented in the model.*

*We shall be looking at how we make this a regular feature that can provide further assurance to the board.*

”

**John Coyne, Chair Paddle UK**

“

*As we all face an increasing number of audits and compliance checks, it has been a pleasure to engage in a far more developmental process which can really bring organisational health to life.*

*It has also been refreshing to be part of a wider group designing the concept. The strength of this diagnostic is in how it is used and we, at British Shooting, have embraced it as an aid to continuous improvement.*

*Crucially, also, it has afforded us the chance to bring a diverse range of perspectives to the table, both from within and without our organisation. We will definitely continue to use the diagnostic tool and embed it in our ongoing organisational development.*

”

**Hamish McInnes, CEO British Shooting**

