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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

SKILLSACTIVE ON CHOOSING ACTIVITY

SkillsActive has called on the Government to take positive action to enable more people to become physically active.

In its response to the Choosing Activity strand of the Government's public health consultation, which closes at the end of the month, SkillsActive has highlighted action the Government should take to support the Active Leisure and Learning Sector.

Amongst the recommendations was a call for the Government to introduce a minimum week-long outdoor residential experience, such as those run by PGL and the Outward Bound Trust, delivered through school for all school aged children.

Following SkillsActive's recent lobbying success of getting the word "recreation" included in the Children Bill, it went a step further in its response by calling for the provision of play facilities to be made a statutory obligation for local authorities, particularly in inner cities.

SkillsActive also called for a review of the planning system to ensure that the physical activity needs of local communities are, where possible, given priority over other concerns.

The Government was encouraged to take action to support volunteers in the response, by enabling them to acquire appropriate qualifications and training to allow them to carry out their role without undue fear of litigation.

SkillsActive also called on the Government to take concerted action to encourage employer contributions to staff membership of health clubs by exempting membership from P11d. SkillsActive believe that health club membership should not be viewed as a taxable benefit.

Another central recommendation from SkillsActive was the development of a promotional programme or badge accreditation scheme for employers who encourage physical activity and well being in the workplace.

In a bid to bring about greater consistency in exercise referral schemes, SkillsActive also suggested the Government should promote the development of schemes in every Primary Care Trust area and encourage Primary Care Trusts to include the schemes in their clinical audit programmes.

The response will help inform the Public Health White Paper, due to be published by the Government later this year.

- Ends -

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. SkillsActive is the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for sport & recreation, playwork, health and fitness, outdoor education/training and adventure and caravan industries.

2. SkillsActive's mission statement is: "To ensure best quality, best business and best value within the Sector to achieve its economic and social potential."

3. SSCs are employer-led organisations that aim to tackle the skills and productivity needs of their sector throughout the UK. SSCs provide employers with the opportunity to provide leadership to meet their sector's skills and business needs. In return they receive substantial public investment and greater dialogue with government departments across the UK.

4. For more information about SkillsActive, please visit our website @ www.skillsactive.com

5. A copy of SkillsActive's full response to the Choosing Activity consultation can be found on the website or by emailing Jilly Evans, SkillsActive Public Affairs Officer at: jilly.evans@skillsactive.com

6. A summary of SkillsActive's main recommendations follows:

- 1 SkillsActive recommends Sport England as the lead agency in rolling out a national physical activity campaign, although it is suggested that a department should be established within Sport England's overall structure to take the lead on physical activity.
- 2 SkillsActive recommends the Government introduces a minimum week-long outdoor residential experience, such as those run by PGL and the Outward Bound Trust, delivered through school for all school aged children.
- 3 SkillsActive recommends that Government acts to reverse the regrettable trend for teachers to abstain from extra curricula activities with pupils.
- 4 SkillsActive recommends the Government provides incentives for private sector gyms to take an interest in the health and well being of the local community by creating links with local schools.

- 5 SkillsActive recommends that the Government develops a promotional programme or badge accreditation scheme for employers who encourage physical activity and well being in the workplace.
- 6 SkillsActive calls on the Government to take concerted action to encourage employer contributions to staff membership of health clubs by exempting membership from P11d. Health club membership should not be viewed as a taxable benefit.
- 7 SkillsActive recommends that the provision of play facilities be made a statutory obligation for local authorities, particularly in inner cities, and calls for concerted action to address, at a local level, parental concerns that inhibit opportunities for children to play (such as safety concerns).
- 8 SkillsActive calls for a working group to be established to feed into the Russell Commission to look specifically at the barriers and deterrents to volunteering in the UK in order to stem the flow of volunteers away from sport and active leisure.
- 9 SkillsActive calls on the Government to act to support volunteers in acquiring appropriate qualifications and training to allow them to carry out their role without undue fear of litigation.
- 10 SkillsActive recommends that the Government re-launch and reinvigorate the community TOPS club programme to provide an incentive for clubs to diversify and expand into their communities and make their facilities fully available for different sports in the locality.
- 11 SkillsActive recommends that the Government encourage community clubs to develop the concept of “sinking funds” to cover future replacement of capital assets.
- 12 SkillsActive calls for a review of PPG 17 to ensure that the physical activity needs of local communities are, where possible, given priority over other concerns.
- 13 SkillsActive recommends a dialogue be initiated and maintained between the Department of Health and the Outdoor Sector, namely through meetings with the representatives of the Outdoor Sector and Activity Coordination Team and Department of Health officials, in order that the contribution the Outdoor Sector can make to public health is fully realised.
- 14 SkillsActive supports the formation of an All Party Adventure Group. The Government should recognise that there may be benefits in adventure and calculated risk and examine ways of reducing the increasing culture of litigation and blame which damages legitimate sporting and adventure activities.

- 15 SkillsActive calls on the Government to encourage exercise referral schemes in every Primary Care Trust area and to encourage Primary Care Trusts to include the schemes in their clinical audit programmes.
- 16 SkillsActive also recommends the Department of Health looks again at the Quality Assurance Framework for Exercise Referral Schemes with a view to establishing a mechanism for establishing the overall take up and quality of the schemes.