



**Janet Finch-Saunders MS|AS**

Aelod Senedd Cymru dros Aberconwy  
Member of the Welsh Parliament for Aberconwy



Dafydd Elis-Thomas MS,  
Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport, and Tourism,  
Welsh Government,  
*By email*

22 June 2020

Dear Deputy Minister,

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I hope that you are keeping well and write following the announcement made by the First Minister on 19 June 2020 with regards to unlocking Wales. As you will know, from today onwards restrictions on outdoor sports courts have been lifted, but social distancing must be maintained. More so, no contact or team sports are allowed. Indeed, I am aware that some indoor and outdoor facilities are still not able to open.

Interestingly, elite athletes, such as our Olympic and Paralympic Games hopefuls, are now authorised to resume their training programmes. Undoubtedly, they do need to maintain structured training and have access to appropriate facilities to properly prepare for the time when sporting competition resumes, and as such I welcome the fact that changes today will mean that elite athletes can:

- travel for training in Wales and across the UK
- train in small groups and train with coaches from outside their household
- access facilities for the purposes of undertaking training

Our elite athletes would not have reached their high standard without years of practice and hard work. Therefore, I am extremely concerned that the decision to only allow elite athletes to train is short sighted and could have a detrimental impact on our sporting hopefuls in the long term. Indeed, a number of young, talented, sporting enthusiasts have been stopped from being able to undertake their usual activities. For example, I am aware of sporting coaches who are unable to recommence 1-1 coaching or small non-contact football group sessions with children, under the current rules.

If children are allowed to return to school and child care settings, I would be grateful if you could clarify what science justifies them being unable to attend non-contact sport sessions, such as football training. Similarly, many children will today be visiting shops with their parents – touching clothing on rails and food on shelves amongst potentially numerous residents. How is this risk acceptable when kicking a ball to and training with other players and a coach is not?

I look forward to hearing from you soon and hope that you can provide much needed clarity. The future of Welsh sporting talent needs to be considered, not just existing elites.

Yours sincerely,

**Janet Finch-Saunders MS/AS**