

**PRESS RELEASE:** April 2018

### **SWITCH THE PLAY AND DOCIASPORT ANNOUNCE OFFICIAL PARTNERSHIP**

Switch the Play (StP) and DOCIASport have cemented a working partnership focused on supporting individual athletes and organisations in the promotion and delivery of effective duty of care in elite sport.

The partnership announcement coincides with the publication of the Government's 'Action Plan - Mental Health and Elite Sport' report. The document, driven by government and produced in collaboration with a range of mental health and sports organisations, details clear recommendations as to the action that needs to be taken to improve the level of mental health support offered to individuals and players involved in professional sport.

Speaking about the partnership, Rob Young MBE, Director at StP, says: "Many athletes moving from a life inside of sport to a life outside of sport suffer mental health problems. Earlier this year the Professional Players Federation (PPF) released results of a survey completed by 800 ex-players which showed more than half of former professional sportspeople have concerns about their mental wellbeing. This is simply not an acceptable figure and is one which we believe could be dramatically reduced through better support and education specifically designed to help athletes prepare for transition.

"Many athletes find their sporting career is cut short by an unexpected and often uncontrollable factor such as injury or deselection. According to the PPF survey, only 3 in 10 athletes actually make a conscious choice relating to their own retirement. This means that a high percentage of players and athletes suddenly find themselves in unfamiliar territory, trying to carve out a future for themselves in an unfamiliar environment. This can cause incredible levels of stress, leading to long term mental health problems if the athlete has not been prepared to deal with this eventuality."

This new partnership with DOCIA sport will see our two organisations working together to raise awareness of mental health issues surrounding athlete transition and promoting support solutions. In addition to helping individual athletes to better equip themselves for the future, we will also provide collaborative support services to organisations keen to fulfil their duty of care."

StP is a social enterprise driven by ex-professional sportspeople with personal transition experience. DOCIAsport is an organisation driven by first-hand experience of supporting athletes experiencing mental health issues.

Ian Braid, CEO at DOCIAsport, adds: “This is a partnership which makes total sense. Supporting the mental and emotional wellbeing of our professional athletes, both on and off the field is an essential element of a duty of care. I am encouraged by the Government’s commitment to raising awareness of the whole issue of mental health in sport and also to the combined commitment of the Sport and Recreation Alliance, Mind and the PPF through the launch of the Mental Health Charter. The Charter has attracted the support of more than 300 organisations, a list which continues to grow, suggesting there is far reaching support for the pursuit of better care for our athletes and others in sport when it comes to mental health.”

The partnership sees both parties sharing expertise and resources in order to strengthen the support available to athletes as they prepare for a successful future either inside or outside of sport.

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