

Message from our CEO Chris Jones

19 March 2020

In these uncertain times I wanted to reach out to you personally as a member of the England Athletics family to ensure you that we will be doing all we can to support you during the coming days and weeks.

As deflating and disruptive as the decision to suspend all activity until the end of April will have been, I have no doubt that it was the right decision to make as we play our own part as an athletics and running family in helping to prevent the spread of this awful virus. We do however know this is a hugely difficult time for our members, clubs and organisations and we're continuing to talk to as many of you as possible to get a fuller picture about the impact coronavirus (COVID-19) is having.

Athletics and Running play a vitally important role in our society and positively impacts the lives of many people. We know that it brings people together, forging lifelong friendships and companionships and in providing a place of belonging and learning for many thousands of participants, whatever their background, ability, age, gender or aspiration.

I know how important my local club was for me as I grew up and developed into adulthood and I know those same personal experiences will harbour in the soul of many club members across the land. It is a feeling that compels you to want to inspire and create experiences for others to feel the same and it is why our great sport continues to offer so much to so many. I have witnessed this spirit in hundreds of athletics and running clubs and groups across England during the last decade. Our network of great clubs and running groups has continued to grow in recent times because of the inspirational work of so many selfless volunteers who give so much for others and whose great energy has fostered an unbreakable spirit of togetherness. It is this same spirit that will see us through these troubling times.

Inevitably we will all need to adapt and change our approach to ensure that we maintain all that is good about our sport. Despite the suddenness of change, I am already aware that a number of forward thinking clubs and groups are already adapting and are thinking creatively about how they maintain connectivity with their members during this fallow period, utilising digital tools and systems such as webinars and other forms to coordinate and convey information, advice and guidance to best support the physical and mental health and wellbeing of their members. As an organisation we will be doing the same and will be working to do all we can to provide support to our member clubs and organisations in this respect. We will all need to think differently about how we operate as we work together through this period.

Over the coming weeks we are committed to:

- Supporting the Athletics & Running family in England to ensure that we come through this period together in as strong a position as possible.
- Working with you, our members, to understand what specific support is required across our clubs to sustain our sport in the short and the long term.
- Changing the way in which we communicate and provide our services so that we are doing everything we can to encourage people to stay active, wherever possible, which we think is now more important than ever.
- Rescheduling specific activities and programmes for our members and participants.

Please continue to visit our website and social media channels for information and advice:

www.englandathletics.org/coronavirus.

Owing to the unprecedented and uncertain times we find ourselves in as a sport and wider community, we do understand that clubs and other Athletics & Running bodies will be experiencing some unforeseen pressures in the immediate term. We are aware that many of our member clubs will be struggling to coordinate themselves as they would normally do during this period of suspension and with this in mind we are reviewing a number of areas as an organisation as we approach what is traditionally the outdoor spring and summer season and for many the beginning of another membership year.

We will need some time to do this robustly and with the right information at our disposal. We will do all we can to listen, and to be flexible in our actions during this period.

Above all else we hope you; your family and your friends remain safe and healthy. Take care and give care to each other. **We will get through this.**

Best wishes,
Chris Jones