

Culture, Media and Sport Committee

Oral evidence: Women's sport, HC 1205

Wednesday 5 July 2023

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Members present: Dame Caroline Dinenage (Chair); Kevin Brennan; Clive Efford; Julie Elliott; Jane Stevenson.

Questions 1-66

Witnesses

I: Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE and Sally Munday, Chief Executive, UK Sport.

II: Baroness Sue Campbell DBE, Director of Women's Football, the Football Association, and Ellen White MBE, retired professional footballer and Lioness.



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE and Sally Munday.

Q1 Chair: Welcome to our first session on women's sport. We begin our inquiry as a summer of sport is well under way, with the women's Ashes continuing this evening and Wimbledon ongoing, and of course we are looking ahead to hopefully a very successful summer for our incredible Lionesses, with the world cup beginning in just over a fortnight.

In our first panel, we will look at the overall state of women's sport with Sally Munday OBE, who is the chief executive of UK Sport, and Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, whose background speaks for itself; she has a CV longer than I think we have time for in this meeting. A huge welcome to both of you. I will start the questioning. Can I remind Members that if you have any declarations of interest, you should make them before you ask your questions?

We have seen such a significant growth in women's sport and, in particular, in its popularity over recent years. How have you seen that impact the sports where you have some form of responsibility or influence? Tanni, can I start with you?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: I think where we have seen an impact is the greater understanding of the challenges around women and girls competing. There is still a reasonable amount of challenge and almost discrimination in some places. We generally value sporty boys more than sporty girls, but that is starting to change. I think the impact we have seen is in the support for women's sport. The fan base has improved significantly.

I will give you an anecdote. I was on a train the other day listening to two young boys talk about football. They were talking about the women's football team, not the men's football team. That is a major change. Again, on a personal level, we are less likely to see broadcast interviews decrying women's sport, saying that it is not good and that it is not the same. There are still a few people out there who believe it, but there has probably been more change in the last 10 years—since 2012, probably—than in the previous 30.

Chair: Yes, I think that is right. Sally.

Sally Munday: First, thank you for inviting us to give evidence. I am really pleased to be here.

This topic is really important to us. A lot of our work at UK Sport is focused on Olympic and Paralympic sport, which, interestingly, has been truly dual gender for an awfully long time. What we are now seeing with the progress that professional sports are making in terms of impact is, as Tanni says, a much better understanding that elite women's sport is just elite sport. It is not something that should be considered any less than men's sport. I think the fact that we have been investing in Olympic and



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Paralympic sport equally for men and women for the last 25 years is why we have been so successful in women's sport in the Olympic and Paralympic space.

Over the last 10 years, as Tanni says, we have seen investment from the professional sports. Football—I know that you will hear from Baroness Campbell later—is a brilliant example of that. It has made a significant investment in women's sport. It is no surprise that we are now seeing the women's footballers do really well, because they have been able to train full time and be full-time athletes, as their male counterparts have been for decades.

The conversations in sport are changing, but one of the brilliant things about sport is that, when we tackle things like this, it changes the conversations in everyday society as well. We are seeing that anecdotally, as well as in conversations that we are seeing and research that we are doing.

- Q2 **Chair:** Obviously, the policies, the promotion, the organisation and the funding of teams and individual athletes has led to a growth in the popularity of women's sport, but to what extent has that growth in popularity influenced the policies on all those things?

Sally Munday: It is interesting for us in the Olympic and Paralympic space. We do two things. We invest in the 50-odd Olympic and Paralympic sports. The reality is that a lot of those sports are, in essence, what you would describe as amateur sports. With the investment of successive Governments of both colours, we have been able to consistently invest in women's sport as well as men's sport for the last 25 years. That has influenced the impact of those sports.

What I think we are starting to see with the sports outside the Olympic and Paralympic space is that, using the FA as an example, they have invested in the women's game. It has shown that it is popular—the success has shown that it is popular. We saw what happened last summer. That is changing the decisions of commercial partners and broadcasters because they are realising that elite women's sport is just good sport. I think the popularity is then seeing this increase of interest.

UK Sport is also the arm's length body for Government that works on bringing major events to this country. Since 2012, 92% of the events that we have invested in have included women's sport. Again, our policy is very much to look for events that can impact socially. A good example is the rugby league world cup last year, where we saw the men's, women's and wheelchair events all treated equally. The good policy and investment decisions over the last 10 or 20 years in major events and in Olympic and Paralympic sport—and the good decisions over the last 10 years by some of our professional sports—mean that interest in women's sport has started to really grow and snowball.

- Q3 **Chair:** What criteria do you use to work out what events you will prioritise as part of the strategy?



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Sally Munday: We have a really sophisticated scorecard, for want of a better word, where we look at a number of things, such as economic impact on the local environment. If you look at some of the statistics from the women's Euros last year, the hockey world cup in 2018, or the netball world cup in Liverpool in 2017, economic impact in the local area was really important.

In addition to economics, we look at the growth of the sport itself, and the societal and social impact. Again, the rugby league world cup last year is a really good example. Having the women's game and the wheelchair game alongside the men's game, with equal billing, footing and approach, changes society's perceptions. It changes people's view of what good sport is, and I think that is really important. Our scorecard for how we evaluate takes all of that into consideration.

Nearly all of the events that we have bid for and have coming up over the next few years are dual gender. In fact, the one that stands out that isn't is the women's rugby world cup, which is obviously female only.

Baroness Grey-Thompson: I sat on UK Sport when the lottery Act changed, meaning that elite sport was able to be funded and supported. There was always equal support for men and women. Some of it ended up being based on what events were available at the Olympics and Paralympics. I think the UK influence on international sport and the IOC and IPC, in terms of fighting hard for equality, has really helped with the number of athletes that are able to compete at Olympics and Paralympics. We should never forget that the UK has a very strong soft power influence on decisions that are being taken worldwide.

Q4 **Jane Stevenson:** I will declare that I have received hospitality in the past from the FA, the Premier League and the England and Wales Cricket Board.

I was thinking about how the Olympic and Paralympic teams have managed to increase female prominence and priority. What lessons can other UK sports leagues learn from that? Are there any UK sports leagues that you can single out as being especially bad or good at including more female representation?

Sally Munday: As I said, we have been investing really strongly in Olympic and Paralympic sport for the last 25 years. Since then, we have invested equally in men's and women's sport, and a lot of the Olympic and Paralympic sports are what you would describe as truly dual gender. It has been encouraging to see recently what is happening in some of the professional sports. They have historically been considered to be male sports and so have been on catch-up on the female side. It is the work of people like Baroness Campbell and others, who have gone in there and not accepted no for an answer, that has forced the increase in investment, which I think is really important.

To pick up on something that Tanni just said, in the Olympic and Paralympic space, the competitions themselves are dual gender and are given the same weighting. We still have a slight disparity in the Olympic



programme, but only a tiny bit. The number of medals available is soon going to be exactly equal for men and women. That is really important. As UK plc, we need to continue to influence by getting British people on to international boards and sporting bodies so that we can have a leadership role. UK Sport invests in people to try to get them into places of influence. We have a really important target to increase the number of women on international boards. The international sports federations are still very male dominated.

Q5 Jane Stevenson: Do you have any figures about that?

Sally Munday: Yes, I do. I can send you very accurate figures, but we are currently at about 27% internationally for women sitting on boards. From a British perspective, that figure is higher. Our aspiration is for 50%, and we are making some very specific interventions to enable that, in terms of the international leadership programme that we do. We have launched a really interesting mentoring programme this summer. We have invited 10 very prominent, experienced female leaders on the international stage to mentor another 10 up and coming international representatives, to learn lessons that they have experienced.

We can send you the accurate figures, but that is broadly where we are at. Having women in decision-making roles, either domestically or internationally, is one of the things that is going to help move the dial, and we are very focused on enabling that to happen.

Baroness Grey-Thompson: I am smiling because I think it was 11 years ago that a British governing body approached a number of women who worked in sport and said it was going to put a woman on the board. The tone around that was quite funny. It then said that that woman could talk only about women's issues. I thought that was the whole of the sport.

Work by UK Sport and home country sports councils on representation on both UK and home country boards has made a big change, as well as the drive for diversity, which is important. I chair Sport Wales, and we fund things slightly differently from UK Sport, but we have had a strong priority and emphasis on women's sport. Our funding model now looks very strongly at women's participation. We have our A Place for Sport fund, which focuses on engaging women. We invest in the international working group, which is helping to shine a light on discrepancies in women's sport.

We have a number of Welsh-based governing bodies that are doing a huge amount. Football has the For Her programme. We have bowls, triathlon, golf, cricket, basketball, swimming—I will send you the details, because it is a long list. We are pushing hard with all the Welsh governing bodies to say, "You have to think differently about what you do." Partly, that comes into the Welsh Government remit; physical activity and the health of the nation are closely linked to what we fund, as well as funding some pathway. It is much more at the grassroots that we support.

Q6 Jane Stevenson: It might be too early to comment at length, but the female coaches leadership programme in 2021 sounded like a significant



intervention. Do you have any comments about how that is already impacting female athletes and performance?

Sally Munday: We introduced that programme because, despite the fact that the number of female athletes we invest in, and the number of female athletes who represent GB and Northern Ireland at the Olympic and Paralympic games, is almost equal, in terms of coaching it is not, and we have a long way to go.

There are probably two things to comment on. The specific programme you mentioned is seeking to identify women who have the potential and aspiration to coach at the highest level, and to invest in specific support for them, giving them experiences alongside current successful women's coaches—people like Mel Marshall in swimming, who coaches Adam Peaty—to give the next cohort of Olympic and Paralympic coaches opportunities to learn from them. The feedback we are getting from those potential coaches is really positive. We are aiming to significantly increase the number of female coaches who go to the Olympic and Paralympic games. So that is probably a question to ask me again after Paris, but it is really important.

We have another generic programme for coaching, for men and women. Just because it is a generic programme, we have not taken our eye off the ball of wanting to push women into that. Over 60% of the people on that programme are female. So we do a number of different programmes. Some are very specific and targeted at women only, and sometimes we target women with generic programmes. It depends on the needs of the sport and of the individual.

Baroness Grey-Thompson: I think most governing bodies recognise—this has been true over a number of years—the lack of women in coaching, so a lot of governing bodies will run specific coaching programmes for women. Athletics, for example, recognised very early on the challenges of childcare and the cost. A two-day course actually was quite difficult for women to come to, so they provided some crèche facilities and were very supportive. But that is quite a slow change. Again, it has improved. I don't remember, from when I first started competing, a female coach in my athletics club. This has changed a lot, but women volunteering and being involved in sport and then doing the coaching qualifications do provide some challenges.

Q7 **Jane Stevenson:** I am going to turn to the issue of audiences. I was honoured to be with Baroness Campbell at Molineux to see the Lionesses have a warm-up match before Lionesses mania really took off. How dependent is audience growth on big events like the Olympics and the women's Euros, and how can we capitalise on growing women's sport audiences?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: Some of this is about people recognising that women's sport is really good sport. That will help to build the audience. I don't think it is necessarily about converting—in relation to professional sports—people who watch men's sport; I think there is an



opportunity to bring different people in to watch women's sport. One thing that came across really strongly in a lot of people I spoke to, from watching the Euros, was how different the crowd was at a women's game versus a men's game. There was no abuse and no drunkenness. It was really lovely to see that. The reality is that professional sports need to develop that fan base. I think football and cricket have the ability to absolutely change how women see themselves participating in and playing sport, volunteering—being involved at every level. Closing the gender pay gap is also dependent on getting audiences in and getting sponsors in. The Women's Sport Trust has done really interesting work on the value of women's sport, which, again, I can send to the Committee. The base seems to be growing, which is good.

Q8 Jane Stevenson: Yes, it was lovely to see families going together, and I do remember that the football chants were about an octave and a half higher than at a normal Wolves match! It was all these young girls, absolutely thrilled to be watching such fantastic footballers.

Sally Munday: Unquestionably, the investment in events and in women's events in this country is critical to driving the audience and then the profile, and the profile then driving interest and participation. As I mentioned, since 2012, of the events that we have invested in at UK Sport, 90% have included men's and women's events. We have been blessed over the last few years: we have had back-to-back women's world cups—in cricket in 2017, in hockey in 2018 and in netball in 2019. If you take netball as an example, well over 6 million people attended or watched that event.

There is a saying—it's a bit corny—"If you can't see it, you can't be it." The reality for me—I am in my 50s—is that when I was growing up, you didn't see much women's sport. I think it is really important that we continue to invest in major events. With the Olympics and Paralympics, we have that pinnacle of the summer event every four years. But what we are setting out to do and have been doing since 2012 is keeping that engagement between every games and the next with the events we are hosting. This summer we have a whole raft of events, including the cycling world cup up in Scotland. For the first time ever, all cycling disciplines are being held in one country. That is track, road, BMX, mountain biking—all of it is being held in one place. But we are also this summer hosting a whole range—the biggest number we have ever hosted—of Paralympic events. Again, this is where you get to see men and women competing at the same events on an equal footing. That drives audiences and audience interest. That drives profile. Profile will drive interest and participation. It is all inextricably linked.

Jane Stevenson: Thank you.

Q9 Julie Elliott: You have both alluded to this. I want to ask some questions about the money and revenue in women's sport. As you have said, the increasing popularity of women's sport across the board has been enormous. How do we make sure that brings in revenue to invest and grow the sport even more? Can you tell us about any work that is going



on or that should be done? I will start with Tanni and then go to Sally.

Baroness Grey-Thompson: In terms of what we can do as sports councils, we are able to very closely target our investment and, with the funding streams, put a high level of emphasis on women's sport. In terms of TV rights, sponsorship and other money that has come into sport, you have to be able to sell that package and it is probably only in the last couple of years that there is the recognition that those deals are worth something. Certainly, pre-2012, it felt like there was very little interest in some of the women's professional sports. It is much easier with the Olympics and Paralympics because that is sold as one package, but with the women's sports themselves, it was a very difficult sell. That level of understanding is changing.

Also, there has been a lot of work done to work with sponsors to get them to know that they are getting a really good deal if they invest in women's sport now. Actually, it is much cheaper than men's sport. That is not to devalue it, but actually, a small amount of investment buys into a really good, strong product that will develop further. There is a lot of work going on in that space.

Q10 **Julie Elliott:** The *Sports Business Journal* said it is the biggest untapped revenue opportunity in sport. I am very keen to know how that is going to be tapped into.

Sally Munday: There are lots of things running through my head in terms of how to respond to your question. The main thing I think I would say is that if you look at this through a pure business lens, you'll see that businesses will invest in things for return on growth later, in its simplest form. What we are starting to see is that, where they have invested not necessarily for immediate growth or immediate return on investment financially, they are starting to see that further down the line.

We have a number of brands that came to the women's party early—the likes of Investec and Vitality—which have invested in women's sports events over the last 10 years. Investec came to the party in 2010, investing very heavily in women's hockey. It is no surprise that six years later the women's hockey team became Olympic champions and Investec reaped the reward of that. We have seen the investment of Vitality in football, netball and cricket—a number of sports—and it is reaping the rewards. We are seeing other investors now, such as Barclays, which has come to football, and other brands, which are saying, "There is return on investment here; it is a good thing for our brand to be associated with."

There is a simplicity to how you generate money for sport around ticket revenue, sponsorship revenue, broadcast revenue and sales of goods and services. When you get under the skin of that, it is really very simple. A big percentage of our country is female and a big percentage of our country has the role of household decision maker on spend. Therefore, if you take a step back and look at it purely through a business lens, which we are seeing more and more broadcasters and commercial partners do,



they are waking up—and have been recently—to this being a huge untapped market. I genuinely believe we are at a tipping point.

What is really important for us as a public investor and for us at UK Sport with lottery and Exchequer money is that we set the tone and set the standard of making sure that it is equal investment. That is what we have done in Olympic and Paralympic sport for the last 25 years. It is up to other sports now to come to the party and invest in an equal way. We are seeing that happen. Just things like this hearing and this conversation are important in raising the bar in terms of the conversation we are having about women's sport.

- Q11 **Julie Elliott:** There are two sides to this. There is the investment in sport to grow the sports across the board, but then, as Tanni mentioned, there is the gender pay gap, which is enormous in sport. As of 2020, more than 50% of elite British sportswomen received less than £10,000 annually. Some 34.5% received nothing at all. What work is going on to ensure that as more money comes into sport across the board, it goes to not only growing the sport but paying people to become professional or semi-professional athletes or sportspeople?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: I think there is something about now seeing more women in the media. We are seeing more women in those sponsorship brands and with decision-making powers. Again, seeing a few more women as agents is really interesting. You need women—or men who understand women's sport—across a whole range of events, so some of it will take time.

In terms of lottery funding, that is totally equal. The funding has always been that way. It is about understanding how women connect to sponsors. Sadly, women's sponsorship still tends to depend very much on how they look. It is really difficult, because men do not experience that in the same way that women do. Anna Kournikova was able to generate huge amounts of sponsorship but she was not the best tennis player in the world. That is really hard, and it is hard for a lot of women to see that.

We also have to think about how we support pathway, and whether that is funded or non-funded. The cost of pathway is quite expensive. Sports say that the average cost of pathway is £10,000 a year at 15 or 16 years old. Actually, if you are a female in sport and less likely to get sponsorship as you go through, that could be a challenge, so it is probably easier to drop out as a woman in sport. There are lots of different levers that we need to be trying to pull.

A lot of it comes back to if we have Olympic and Paralympic athletes doing incredibly well. There is an interesting dichotomy in Paralympic sport: female athletes probably do better than the men. That is probably because disability is one box where everyone gets chucked in together, as opposed to split into male and female. You have to have women doing well to feed down to then see that there is a product worth investing in.



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Sally Munday: I think your stats are important, but it is also important to put on the table that Olympic and Paralympic sport has set the standard with this, because it is invested equally. The athlete personal awards—the performance awards that athletes get—are equal and have been equal since we have been investing for the last 25 years, so it is no surprise that at Tokyo we saw, for the first time ever, more females on the Olympic team than the male team.

Q12 **Julie Elliott:** What I am asking about really is the extra money that will come in from the other revenue sources, not the moneys that are invested in Olympic sport through Government and the lottery and whatever. How will we ensure that that does not just go on other things? It needs to grow the sport, but women sportspeople need to see some of the benefit of that. That is what I am really interested in understanding. How do you think we do that?

Sally Munday: In Olympic and Paralympic sport, there isn't loads and loads of money coming in outside of the investment we make, because they are traditionally amateur sports. Some of our Olympic and Paralympic sports have been very successful in bringing in commercial revenue. Quite often, what the sports will do is see enhanced opportunities for women in their sports. Before I was doing this job, I led an Olympic sport that was truly male and female, but for a long time the women were doing a lot better than the men. The commercial revenue that came in from the partner there actually gave the females opportunities that their male counterparts did not get.

What we are seeing with the likes of the FA, the ECB and the RFU and what they are doing in the women's space is that they are trying to ensure that the money that comes in for women's sport does go to benefiting women's sport. I think we are a long way off seeing the same amount of commercial money coming into women's sport as goes into men's sport. A lot of the money that does come in is going to grow the sport. What is brilliant is that we have a cohort of incredibly talented athletes across all of the sports in professional and Olympic and Paralympic sport who care deeply about this topic and will speak out about it. Gradually, over time, as Tanni says, I think we will see it grow and people get equal revenue, but we are some way off it in the professional sports.

Baroness Grey-Thompson: The Football Association of Wales announced earlier this year that they pay the men's and women's team exactly the same amount. It does not take into account the split in terms of what the male international players earn in their day job, but that is a really important tone.

You can also look at what the RFU have done in terms of women's contracts, and the WRU—the Welsh Rugby Union—have put more money into women's contracts. It is probably not equal yet, but it is really important that professional sports do everything they can to at least fund that level equally. It will take time for the money to come in. In 2012 there was a list of the top 10 earners from the Olympic games. Two out of the 10 were women, but it was not quite a true representation because



there were footballers and others in there that skewed the figures slightly. It does show that there is a long way to go on that.

- Q13 **Julie Elliott:** If we turn to the other big issue in terms of women—in society, not just in sport—there is misogyny and sexism. In the current climate, how is that manifesting itself in sport? I could say, “Where do you start?”

Baroness Grey-Thompson: I have experienced quite a lot of misogyny over the years, and probably some ableism as well. Sometimes it is difficult to figure out which one I am being exposed to. I have had meeting rooms booked that are inaccessible when going to a sports meeting. They rang me to tell me it was an inaccessible meeting room. But I have had worse. I have been physically threatened several times. Social media has not been as bad as for others, certainly not as bad as some female elite athletes get. But the misogyny that exists in society at the moment is really difficult. If as a woman you have an opinion on women’s sport or what a woman is, you expose yourself to a huge amount of distress and appalling behaviour.

- Q14 **Julie Elliott:** What do you think can be done to try to stem it and make it better?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: I am not sure I have ever really thought about that. Sadly, too many women expect it as the norm. On my experiences over the years—in administration as opposed to being an athlete—I experienced hardly any misogyny as an athlete. It has all been when I moved into administration. Sometimes women just end up feeling they have to accept it, and there are not always places to go to raise it. When I did raise a physical threat that I had received, I was told not to be such a woman. When that happens, it is really difficult to raise the issue, so all the women I know who work in sport are incredibly resilient, because we have had to be. I am not sure I know the answer.

Sally Munday: To answer your first question about how it shows up, I feel incredibly proud to be a CEO of an organisation that also has a female chair and a leadership team that is more women than men. I feel very proud about that. But some of the ways it shows up is in everyday use of language. That is not just in sport; this is in society.

I will give you an anecdotal example. I was contacted not long ago about whether I was interested in putting my hat in the ring for a chairman’s role and I responded to the agency, “Why would I be interested in that?” They said, “You have all the right experience and skills. You are the sort of person we are looking for.” And I said, “I am clearly not, because you are advertising for a chairman, not a chairperson.” That might be small and semantic, but language is important. Everyday use of language is what we have to change in society as well as sport.

In answer to your question about what we can do, I think there are probably three things. The first thing we can do is make sure we have women in positions of influence—women who are decision makers. At UK Sport, we are doing that through a range of initiatives, some of which we



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have talked about already. We are seeing more and more female leaders—chairs and CEOs of Olympic and Paralympic sports—and it is brilliant to see that the FA has its first female chair. Those things will make a difference.

The second thing is that, as we have discussed, we need to give women's sport more prominence and investment. Through that investment, we have to celebrate the benefits and impact of women's sport.

The third thing—if I can be so bold—is that we have to stop saying, "Thank you," for the titbits and crumbs that women's sports have historically got. We have to stop apologising for our place in sport. We as leaders—me, Tanni, Sue and all of you—have a responsibility in our everyday roles to be prepared to be unpopular in calling out the everyday sexism and misogyny. Yes, it gets boring and frustrating, but as leaders we have a responsibility to do that, because it is that everyday challenge to the everyday language and the everyday things that we experience that is going to make a change. I genuinely believe that a lot of people don't intend to be sexist, but that is why everyday language is so important. We all have a responsibility to challenge it.

Q15 **Julie Elliott:** If you look at the track record of this Committee, we have called that out in many sports on numerous occasions.

Sally Munday: Absolutely.

Q16 **Chair:** Sally and Tanni, do you think we have truly moved past the point where women are appointed to sports boards as an act of tick-box tokenism, or is that still happening?

Sally Munday: I will start, if I may. I do not know how familiar you are with the code for sports governance, which was launched in 2017. We did a review of it. It is a partnership between UK Sport and Sport England. There is a whole range of things within it, but one of them is an ambition around sports boards. In 2017, within that code, we were very clear about what we wanted to see, in terms of gender equality in sports. In the latest data, we have seen a huge increase in the number of women on boards—44% of people on sports boards across the Olympic and Paralympic space are female. I definitely think that, in that space, we have gone beyond the tick-box. It is still prevalent in some sports, and we still have some way to go, but significant progress has been made. It is important that we reflect that growth. We must not rest on our laurels and say, "That's enough," but we have to recognise the progress that has been made.

Q17 **Chair:** Do you think critical mass is a key part of moving into that space?

Sally Munday: Definitely. Anyone in the room who has experienced being a minority in an environment—whether because of your gender, the colour of your skin, your sexuality or whatever else—knows that it helps to be alongside people who look like you and you can recognise. It goes back to whether you see people in positions of power that you recognise, and think, "Yeah, that's something I can do." When you are sat alongside other women who have had a similar experience to you, it is a positive, in terms



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of what others can see, and in giving confidence to people to truly be their authentic selves in those environments. Commercially, the best businesses in the world will tell you that diversity leads to better decision making, which leads to an improved bottom line. We are not necessarily talking about an improved bottom line in sport, but we are talking about better decision making. Having diversity around the board table—people with different experiences and backgrounds—leads to better decisions.

Q18 Chair: Amen to that. Tanni, clearly your sporting pedigree is pretty much second to none, but you have also sat on a lot of boards. Have you ever felt that you have been put on a board as a gesture to diversity?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: Yes, definitely—certainly in my early career in sports admin. There are moments when you accept it because you think it is better to be around the table and try to influence than not, but I have seen a big change in the last 10 to 15 years.

The best governing bodies in this country would recognise that they cannot just approach a woman any more and expect them to feel grateful because they are on a sports board. The women I know are very picky about which boards they will join, and if they do not see the governing body doing it in the right way or being authentic, or they feel their expertise is not going to be used, they are much more able to dissociate themselves from being a fan of the sport and just say, “No, that’s not for me.” The women I see on boards now are not there because of tokenism.

Chair: Thank God for that.

Q19 Kevin Brennan: Bore da, Tanni, and croeso—welcome. Good morning, Sally. People watching might not realise that women’s cricket has a very long pedigree, with the first game ever played and recorded in 1745. I seem to remember from my Ladybird book of history, which is perhaps not the best source, that a woman invented over-arm bowling back in the 19th century. The first test match was held in Brisbane in 1934. The first one-day international at Lords was held in 1976, although Rachael Heyhoe Flint had to lead her team not through the Long Room—they were not allowed—but through the back door.

They still play the Eton and Harrow boys’ public school jamboree cricket match every year at Lords. And yet I was staggered just the other week to realise that no women’s test match has ever been played at Lords; they are finally going to have one in 2026. The Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket found that cricket has “deeply rooted and widespread forms of structural and institutional sexism...across the game.” Is this particularly bad in cricket, or is it just a general symptom of the problem we face with women’s sport?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: I should declare that I am interim chair of Yorkshire County Cricket Club.

Kevin Brennan: Yes, I am going to ask you about that in a minute.

Baroness Grey-Thompson: No, I do not think it is just across cricket. I think it varies in different sports. There are some good bits in sport and



some things that are not so good. With any body that has a membership structure and feels slightly outdated in terms of acceptance of women's sport, those things are going to be hard to change. Do I think there should be women's cricket at Lords? Yes, I do—absolutely—and it would be great if it could be much sooner than the date you mentioned.

Q20 **Kevin Brennan:** Do you think there is any real progress being made as a result of that report, or do you anticipate it?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: The ECB has three months to respond to it. With my Yorkshire hat on, our response is going to be much quicker than that. At Yorkshire, we have fundamentally changed the boys' and girls' pathway to take all the cost out. Until relatively recently, a question that was asked at trials was, "Did your dad or granddad play cricket for Yorkshire?" which immediately took out a massive chunk of people. In terms of what we are doing with the girls' pathway, next year is going to be radically different from anything that has been done before.

There was no ability to play cricket at the school I went to—a lot of women my age did not play it. We are not in the fortunate position of a sport like netball, where a lot of women have played through school and dropped out, and you are then bringing them back in. With cricket, you are starting from scratch. The women who played cricket who are a similar age to me had to be unbelievably resilient to do that.

One thing I am really proud of at Yorkshire is that we have the first female president in 164 years: Jane Powell, who captained England. Likewise, she had to walk down the back stairs to play anything at Lords and has only recently been given her life membership of the MCC, which is automatic for men who have captained England. The ICEC report should not be a surprise to anyone who works in sport. It is the reaction to it that is going to make a massive difference.

Q21 **Kevin Brennan:** Have you felt warmly welcomed at Yorkshire County Cricket Club?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: Yes.

Q22 **Kevin Brennan:** Has that been universal?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: No.

Q23 **Kevin Brennan:** This Committee has obviously delved into this matter and actually had quite a lot of pushback in *The Yorkshire Post* and from various people at Yorkshire County Cricket Club—that we were barking up the wrong tree. Were we, in trying to probe some of these issues at the club?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: I think it is one of those things that was poorly handled at almost every step of the way. Yorkshire is paying the price for that right now, in terms of trying to rebuild. I would say there is a tiny minority—you are talking under 10 people—who do not think that Yorkshire needs to change. The vast majority of members I meet and talk



to were upset about the things that happened, and they want to learn, move on and be better.

- Q24 **Kevin Brennan:** On the work that you are doing around women's cricket at Yorkshire, during the course of that inquiry we spoke to some of the representatives of the Asian leagues in cricket and so on. One of the issues that arose was that there are not many girls, in a culture where cricket is very popular and many participate in the game. Are you doing anything at Yorkshire to also try to encourage girls from ethnic minorities to have opportunities to play the game?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: Yes, I went to a south Asian league meet two weeks ago, and it was the first time that anyone from Yorkshire cricket—or certainly the chair of Yorkshire cricket—had been to the league, and you are talking about a significant proportion of the Yorkshire population that plays through that. We have been discussing how we can change that with a number of different bodies. Probably about 10 years ago, I was told, “Women don't like cricket and football.” Really? I think they do. But it is about having that opportunity to play.

Certainly a challenge for cricket is how it is delivered through state schools, and the ability to make that work in a fun and enjoyable way. We are looking at Yorkshire and doing some work with some of the private schools—there are a lot of private schools in Yorkshire—in terms of how they can offer their space, be more available and do the coaching. For me, we can accelerate the girls' game incredibly quickly, because of what we have done with the boys' game. We should be having lots of girls playing.

Kevin Brennan: I want to ask you about rugby, but I think the Chair wanted to ask a question on cricket, while we are on it.

- Q25 **Chair:** On cricket, the ECB said it would review the affordability of paying women equal wages. Do you think that the ECB is starting from the right attitude in that response?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: I will be pushing very hard on that. The comment about affordability is interesting. How you choose to spend your money is really important, and there are lots of issues. Everyone in sport will say that finances are tight and hard, but it is about what tone you want to set. The sports that do not engage with women and girls—that do not see them as potential fans, buyers of kit, or supporters who will pay for club membership to come and view—are missing a real trick.

- Q26 **Kevin Brennan:** I wanted to ask you about rugby. I attended the first women's world cup final in 1991 at Cardiff Arms Park, back in the day. What is your reaction to the whole controversy around the Welsh Rugby Union, the documentary that was aired on the BBC and the subsequent reaction to that? Would you like to share what you feel about that with the Committee?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: It was really painful to watch. Given everything that I know in sport and how long I have been involved in sport in different capacities, when you see something that is that hard-hitting, it



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is really difficult. The Sports Council for Wales worked with the Welsh Government to put in the team to run the investigation. We were asked for our advice. I think one thing is that that investigation has to work at speed in bringing about real change.

It comes back to something that Sally was saying about calling it out. There are moments in a meeting when an incident was beyond misogynistic, but you are sometimes shocked and are not necessarily sure how to call it out. But somebody should be doing that. I think we have to recognise that, however far women's sport has come, it still sometimes feels slightly tenuous and fragile. The things that I can say at the age of 53 in a meeting are not what a woman in her 20s could say in a meeting. We have to be really cognisant of that in terms of supporting everybody who works in sport.

Q27 Kevin Brennan: I want to give a shout-out to my colleague Tonia Antoniazzi from Gower, who had nine caps for Wales at rugby and who has been a very strong voice on this subject in public.

I will move on to sports science, healthcare and so on. Sally, perhaps I can start with you on this question. I was reading an interesting article recently about ACL injuries, for example, in women's football in *The Athletic*. Is it becoming better at actually dealing with the specific issues that are required to study and treat female athletes with sports-related injuries and illnesses?

Sally Munday: I will talk mostly about the Olympic and Paralympic space, because that is where we invest. A wholly owned subsidiary of UK Sport is an organisation called the UK Sports Institute, and female health is an absolute priority in the work we do. While we invest in athletes in an equal way in men's and women's Olympic and Paralympic sport, we know that there are some very unique things about both genders.

Historically, what sport has seen is that women have been expected to take part in sport that quite often has been designed for men. There is some fantastic work that the UK Sports Institute are doing. They have a whole stream of work dedicated to female health: a number of research projects on the association between the menstrual cycle and concussion; the influence of the menstrual cycle and hormonal contraceptives on performance injury; and the cause of gendered inequalities in sport.

There is a whole range of projects going on, very much using the Olympics and Paralympics and the cohort of athletes. We invest in about 1,100 athletes to do that sort of research. In certain areas, we are working in partnership with some of the professional sports, but then sharing some of the data we learn through that with the professional sports as well. There are other things around concussion. In essence, a huge amount of work and energy is going into that, so that we are looking at very specifically what is different for females in sport and what that means in terms of things we need to do differently in approaches to training, coaching, injury prevention and injury recovery. There are things that, physiologically and biologically, are different, which mean that we should be responding



differently, not just applying what we would do to men to women; I think that is what has historically happened. I definitely feel like there is a lot going on in this space, certainly in the Olympic and Paralympic space, and I am sure that Sue will be able to tell you more about what is going on in football.

Q28 Kevin Brennan: Tanni, you are in a unique position, in a way, as a multi-gold medal winning athlete for Wales and GB and also a senior sports administrator. What is your view on this?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: Sport Wales is doing a lot of work on menstruation. I mean, it seems slightly strange that we are still even talking about that now, because it is not new. It is interesting—it is quite heart-warming that Wimbledon has changed its rules on not having to wear white. There is a debate in cricket about whether women should wear white or not. I think it is good. It does feel like this is a real performance issue that probably has not been tackled enough before, because no doubt menstruation affects performance, training and lots of other things. There was a report recently looking at football boots not being designed especially for girls; they were just changing the sizes. This is something that it is really helpful that we are looking at now for performance and keeping girls injury-free. It is really important.

Q29 Clive Efford: Thank you for coming to give evidence today. Tanni, can I start with you? What is your assessment of the 2012 legacy, particularly in relation to young women in sport?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: I was part of a team in delivery, and then I sat on the LLDC—the London Legacy Development Corporation—for 10 years, so I probably have lots of different views of legacy. I think one of those things is that when we were bidding for the games, the strapline in terms of “Inspire a Nation” was really important. You cannot have a strapline that says, “We will inspire some people”.

Certainly, in terms of the immediate aftermath, you will get a spike in participation. That happens every Olympics and Paralympics. It is what you put in place afterwards to ensure that girls stay in sport. Certainly, the week after Jess Ennis won, my athletics club had about 150 girls who wanted to be heptathletes. Then, you realise training in the north-east of England in the middle of December is not that exciting or pleasant. A lot of clubs and governing bodies have tried really hard to maximise those moments, but it is difficult after that initial enthusiasm. What we know is that major games do have an impact. They very much engage sporty young people, but probably everyone has to work harder to ensure that the ones who are right on the edges stay.

There is more and better work being done on transfer between sports. You might have watched Jess win and decide that you want to be a heptathlete, but actually it is having access to lots of other sports. I think we still need to be looking at what sports are offered in PE lessons in school and how much physical activity is offered within the school day. Especially for girls, that is really important. It comes back to the thing I



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said right at the beginning in terms of how we value sporty girls versus sporty boys. Girls sometimes need a different way to engage to keep them in. That can be less competitive sport; it could be dance; it could be lots of other things, not just necessarily Olympic or Paralympic sport. They might just have a different route to get there.

Q30 **Clive Efford:** Do we get it right in terms of the grassroots facilities that are available and aimed particularly at young women?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: There are lots of good facilities available. I would love to see more women coaches, and that is growing. That will make a difference. The thing I would fundamentally change is the school day. I would have physical activity as part of every school day. I would probably extend the school day.

Clive Efford: So something like school sports partnerships.

Q31 **Chair:** Do you think that schools still divide sports into girl sports and boy sports?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: Some do. I have quite mixed experience of it, but some definitely do. Traditionally, it was seen as hockey and netball for girls, and cricket and rugby for boys. Certainly, the school I went to did that. But I have seen a lot of change. It also depends on what sports young people want to do. If they feel their options are gendered, their ability to pick and choose what they do can be quite limited as well. It comes back to the tone we set for young women, which is why the Lionesses winning and seeing a group of strong, feisty and amazing women has an impact on the choices that girls feel they can make.

Q32 **Clive Efford:** I was going to ask about the cost of doing sport, particularly at grassroots level. We have talked a lot about gender and accessibility for women into sport, but is there a cost barrier that is creating a class barrier in participation in sport?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: Yes, definitely. As soon as you start hitting the pathway, it gets expensive quite quickly, and the ability to pay makes a big difference. If you look at disability sport, the cost of equipment is prohibitive for a lot of people. The average cost of a racing chair now is £8,000 to £10,000. A hand-bike can be £20,000. A scheme was set up where a child gets one sports prosthetic leg, but as soon as they turn 18, they do not get another one, so that cost is too high for most families. The cost in disability sport is very challenging.

Q33 **Clive Efford:** So if Tanni Grey-Thompson gets a phone call to say, "You are now the Minister for Sport", what do you do about it?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: About the cost?

Clive Efford: About all those issues—facilities, access, cost, class divide, gender divide.

Baroness Grey-Thompson: Facilities could be an incredibly expensive problem to fix.



Q34 **Clive Efford:** What is the payback?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: The payback in terms of facilities?

Clive Efford: It is not a zero-sum game, is it?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: That would be a different place in my priority list. My priority list would be school sport and physical activity, in terms of giving increased support to schools to make sure they are able to offer girls as much choice and opportunity as boys.

In terms of the cost of equipment, my experience is of my daughter more recently on a pathway, but I do not think governing bodies necessarily do as much as they could to keep the cost of equipment down; I think there is more they could do to support young people.

Q35 **Clive Efford:** Is there more that Sport England, Sport Wales or Sport Ireland could do?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: I would not go down the route of them funding something like equipment, because the whole of Sport England's or Sport Wales's budget could be sucked up with providing equipment.

Q36 **Clive Efford:** What about Government? What could the Government do about facilities and equipment?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: I am loth to say it, but I am not sure it is a Government issue. I sat on a Select Committee where we looked at whether there should be a national plan for sport. One of our recommendations was that sport comes out of DCMS and goes into Health. That would be a very interesting move forward in terms of how we have a different conversation about legacy and what we are trying to do through major events. I would probably say this as well of Sport Wales, because our remit is looking at health and physical activity, and our aim is to get as many people funded by UK Sport as possible. A different way of looking at sport and physical activity is what is needed.

Q37 **Clive Efford:** I agree with that, but sport is a big fish in a small pond in DCMS. If we put it in Health, it is a small fish in a big pond with a lot of other competing priorities. Be careful what you wish for.

Are there any areas where you think the Government should regulate or where the Government's regulation could be counterproductive and should stay away? Do you think there is anything the Government should be doing to increase women's participation in sport and participation in general?

Baroness Grey-Thompson: In terms of regulation, I have long said that there needs to be an ombudsman in sport. In the report I did in 2017, I had to call it something, so I settled on ombudsman. I am not wedded to it being an ombudsman; it can be something else. Once young women get into sport and are playing within an organised structure, there is more we can do to enable them to call out issues and challenges, and an ombudsman is one part of the answer; it is not the whole answer to everything.



Q38 Clive Efford: Sally, I have to ask, does UK Sport have a problem funding team sports?

Sally Munday: Gosh, no, I do not believe it does have an issue funding team sports. Team sports are and can be more expensive than individual sports because you need a critical mass. Hockey is the sport that I ran for 10 years. It has enjoyed fantastic investment from UK Sport from the last 15 to 20 years, and as a result we have seen fantastic success; the women were back-to-back Olympic medallists in 2012, 2016 and 2020. The reality is that in an individual sport, if you have less money available to you, you can choose to take fewer athletes to an event. In a team sport, you cannot; you have a critical mass that you have to take. But team sports remain really important to UK Sport.

Q39 Clive Efford: What about basketball? It is an example of an emerging sport.

Sally Munday: Yes, they definitely are an emerging sport, and they are currently in receipt of progression money to recognise that. Historically, they have not always been funded, but they are now one of the sports that we term a progression sport, because we can see the potential of what basketball can do in the future. We are in some really interesting discussions with basketball about where their future goes. We are excited about what basketball can do over the long term, which is why we have invested in the progression space.

Baroness Grey-Thompson: Could I add something to that? I think it is true to say that I have been quite challenging on what “medals and more” means, but it is really important that we go beyond just winning medals. When you try to put a binary cost on winning a gold medal, it is not terribly helpful, because in different sports it will cost a different amount.

I was at Loughborough yesterday with a team from UK Sport, and one of the things that came out of that was that if you have a sport like hockey winning a gold medal, you have a number of gold medallists who are then based around the country. It might be one gold medal on the table, but—how many were in the hockey squad for—

Sally Munday: There were 19 of them.

Baroness Grey-Thompson: So that’s 19 medals around the country. That has the ability to do a huge amount of work.

Sally Munday: I will give you a really interesting fact on that. The hockey team came back from Tokyo, having won gold, in early September, and the athletes were in really high demand. Everybody wanted them. One of our athletes lived in the north-west and, in the period from touching down from Tokyo to when I next saw her in person, at the beginning of December, she had done over 90 visits to local schools and community groups in her area—she was given the freedom of the city in the end—because that was really important to her, as it is to a lot of Olympic and Paralympic athletes and as we have seen with the Lionesses. It is important to them to use their success to have an impact by then inspiring



the next generation to take part. As Tanni said, in a team sport, you might have only one medal on the table, but what you have is a large number of medallists. And from a UK Sport perspective, we are interested in medallists and the impact that they can have, not just a medal on the medal table.

Chair: Sally and Tanni, thank you very much for giving evidence to us today. It has been great to see you.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Baroness Sue Campbell DBE and Ellen White MBE.

Chair: For our second panel today, we turn specifically to football and are very lucky to be joined by Baroness Sue Campbell, who is the director of women's football at the FA and something of a legend, and, virtually, by Ellen White MBE, who of course was part of the victorious Euros squad last year and is England's top goalscorer. A huge welcome to both of you. Are you happy for us to call you by your first names?

Baroness Campbell: Absolutely.

Ellen White: Yes.

Q40 **Chair:** Thank you. May I start with you, Sue? How do you think that the success of elite women's football in the UK has filtered down and impacted the sport across the country?

Baroness Campbell: First, thank you very much for inviting me today. I think the success has had a massive impact, in lots of different ways. It has certainly driven an interest among our young people; we have seen a massive increase in the number of youngsters wanting to play the game. We have seen a massive rise in the fanbase: the women's super league and the women's championship have seen a 76% increase in fans coming through the door. And the broadcasters have reported an increase of between 30% and 40% in people's viewing of the women's game.

It has built a huge fanbase, a real appetite for the game, and the players themselves have been incredibly good at taking responsibility not just for winning the Euros, but for doing something very positive and constructive afterwards, in terms of equal access for young people to play football. I think we have used that moment extremely well.

Q41 **Chair:** Ellen, as someone who has been at the coalface of this, what differences have you noticed in the way that this has been filtering through the country, since your success last summer in particular and since the rise of the sport more generally?

Ellen White: I would reiterate what Sue said. At grassroots level, you saw a tenfold increase in girls wanting to participate in football. I think a lot of



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grassroots clubs were overwhelmed by the number of girls who wanted to participate. Moving forward, obviously, we need to help those grassroots teams with their infrastructure and how they can take that load on board; we need to help those clubs to really facilitate the young people who want to play football—for them to have a safe environment.

It has just been really exciting to see societal change as well—for people to really take notice of women, and feel empowered, and for women's football to now be at the forefront of this country. There has been a massive shift in opinions and the way that women's football is perceived. That has been really exciting.

As Lionesses, equal access for football in schools is really something that we are pushing. We want to see that big change. We want young girls to have the same equal access as young boys in schools.

- Q42 **Chair:** Thanks, Ellen. Women's football is sometimes described as like a start-up business model, which is crazy, really, when you consider it has been going for such a long time. I guess it doesn't come with the baggage of the men's game, which allows it to be a little bit more innovative and a bit nimble. What kind of innovations would you like to see over the next five to 10 years that would capitalise on that status?

Baroness Campbell: It is certainly not a start-up, if you talk to the ladies who resurrected football in the '70s and '80s. They were our suffragettes, football-wise, in terms of starting the game again.

We use that expression to describe the emergence of the professional game. While we have seen that grow steadily through the super league and the women's championship, we believe that we are at a critical point now. We want to view that professional development of the game very much as a start-up, picking up on the points you asked about revenue and a business model. While we always put the players at the centre of everything we are doing, we see this as a really big start-up opportunity.

As a start-up business, we want to be agile, but we also want to be innovative. I think we can be innovative in lots of ways. We know a lot more about our fan base. We know a lot more about the sort of commercial partnerships we would like to get engaged with. I think you will see innovation in the way we broadcast the women's game and in the way we cover the women's game, and I think you will see lots of innovation in the way that we attract new fans—and they are new fans. We know that only about 20% of the people that come to women's football also go to men's football, which means we have 80% as a new fan base.

In terms of a business model, understanding those fans is going to be critical for us—how we reach them and engage with them. They are not the traditional football fan. They are actually quite an interesting spread of people. There is particularly big growth in the number of people under the age of 35 coming to watch the women's game. As we learn more about them, I think we can start to be more creative about what the game actually looks like.



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You talked earlier about the excitement and the family feel to the fans during the Euros. We have got to look much more creatively at how we market the game, how we reach the fans and how we support our players, as the game evolves, to earn a good, rightful salary.

Q43 Chair: What would you like to see coming out of the Carney review to accelerate that growth of women's football?

Baroness Campbell: To pick up on what Ellen and I said initially, we would like to see the promise of equal access made a reality. We would like to see Karen support that.

We would like to see much greater investment in the talent pathway. We believe it is very much underinvested in at the moment. As we grow the top of the professional league, it has become very attractive for international players, but we also want it to be the platform for the best of English talent. We have to put a lot more resource into that pathway to give the talent an opportunity.

Ellen picked up on something else as well: we need a better facilities strategy for the women's game, right from the grassroots all the way through to the elite end. We need to think about women's stadia, training grounds, and the talent pathway and what women need. We also need to look at the schools and clubs at the very bottom grassroots of our sport, and at what facilities we really want to be supporting and putting in place.

Obviously, we are very concerned about the vulnerability of the women's game still, with its fragile nature. We would very much want the regulator to take on board the women's game, so that the issues we are seeing—that we have seen in the past and see now with a couple of clubs—can at least be addressed properly.

Chair: Ellen, did you have anything to add to that wish list?

Ellen White: We have to continue to diversify women's football. Sarina has said, obviously, that she can pick only from the pool that she has currently. We have to start with the grassroots and schools, getting into all communities, and having safe environments and accessibility for young people, young girls, to access football, so we can diversify the culture and go into all communities. Then the pool will be a lot bigger for the England manager in future.

I would also talk about putting players at the forefront. I think Sue alluded to facilities, but from my own experience, I was put in a situation where I was not able to gain access to a physio at my own club, and I went on to puncture my lung. I think players need to be at the forefront, to help them move forward, and to help their performance and the elite level. As much as we want to help the grassroots, we have to look at our own WSL and our own clubs, and at how we can make sure that the players are the priority over the actual clubs themselves.

Q44 Chair: On keeping players safe and ensuring that the growth of women's sport is positive, Ellen, do you agree with the PFA that players need more



consultation on the commercial reforms to ensure that they encapsulate all those important subjects?

Ellen White: What do you mean by that?

Chair: The PFA says that players need more consultation on the commercial reforms, to ensure that the growth of women's sport is positive and safe for women who play it. Would you agree with that?

Ellen White: Yes. Commercially, obviously England is massive at the moment, winning the Euros. It is an exciting opportunity, isn't it? Players need to be at the forefront, and they need to be able to earn a living from those commercial viabilities. It has to be player-centred. Women's football is very attractive now, but at the same time we have to be very careful about who we bring in to promote the game. Players need to be at the forefront to help them grow and to gain a living.

Q45 **Jane Stevenson:** Good morning. It is a huge pleasure to have a real-life Lioness in our Committee. I will start by talking about the visibility of players and how women's football has managed to grow so quickly and successfully. In Parliament, we had our "Good luck to the women's World cup team" event this week, and we were all given our Panini sticker album, the ultimate sign that women's football and the recognition of players really have arrived. Loads of girls in schools now have their favourite players. What has football done right to get so quickly to that point? What can other sports learn from the way that football has managed to grow so quickly?

Baroness Campbell: We are all learning from each other at the elite end of women's sport, because we are all professionalising at the same time. We each face very different challenges. What have we tried to do? First, we have had a very good corporate partner and a good broadcast deal, and we have more visibility on the television. We had amazing BBC coverage during the Euros.

The consistent opportunity to view the women's game is important. It used to be random, and it still is a bit. You weren't quite sure what time and what day you were going to be able to turn on and see it. We need some consistency in when we look at the women's game. We have been exploring article 48, which is the whole business of 3 o'clock on a Saturday. When it was put into practice, it was there for men's football, so we would like to see whether women could have that slot on television.

Whatever we do, we need a regular opportunity to view the game that people can access. We need to recognise that we have a younger audience, so sticking it on in an evening—particularly an evening before school the next day—might not be the best time. There are things that we still need to do better, but we have given it visibility in the media and in terms of broadcast. We have worked with really good commercial partners to give it visibility.

What happened at the Euros—that massive party feeling, which started very early on—really captivated people. People wanted to belong to it and



feel part of it. This might be difficult for people to understand, but it is not just the football, which is brilliant—we put on a most extraordinary display of elite sport. It is the sense of being part of something bigger than that. That is really important. All of us who care about women's sport do not just do it for the sport; we do it because we desperately want to play our part in making our society more equitable. We believe sport is one of the most powerful vehicles to achieve that. We have made a lot of progress, but there is still a lot to do.

Q46 Jane Stevenson: Ellen, do you want to comment on that? You must have seen big changes over your career.

Ellen White: Yes, huge changes. Visibility is the biggest one. There was one game shown when I was younger—the FA cup final—and we are now seeing a lot more women's sport on the TV. It is easy to just click on your TV, as Sue said about the BBC. For the World cup, which is coming up, it is the BBC and ITV. It is all about the visibility.

I have had a number of speaking opportunities with different companies, and the visibility—seeing 23 women from completely different backgrounds and communities—has empowered women in all ranges of life. You don't have to be a footballer; it is any workplace. When they see women who have won and been empowered, they can say in their workplace, "Okay, I believe I can move up the ranks. I believe I can go on. I can be better and be empowered within my own workplace." It is all about the visibility of women doing well and feeling supported. Us winning the Euros was a major societal change.

On when the game is shown, we need to look at when grassroots football is played so we can maximise the number of young people and families who come to games. As Sue said, if it is 6.45 pm on a Sunday, there is school the next day. But then again, 11 am on a Saturday is when a lot of grassroots teams play football, so you are really destroying the viewership. It is also about the number of bums on seats in stadiums. We need to look at a good day and a good time to maximise our audience, get bums on seats and grow our fan base. That is how our sport grows.

Q47 Jane Stevenson: Thank you. I presume ticket pricing is changing as the game becomes more popular and tickets are more in demand. Getting families all together to games is a very different problem. You said that your fan base is younger and more family oriented. How are you going to get extra people to the game? What steps are you going to take?

Baroness Campbell: We need to do more research about the new fan base—the fan base we don't know about at this point. We have some idea of it, but we have to get a much more in-depth understanding. We have to find out how you reach that fan base. It might not be through the traditional routes; it might be very different routes. We need to ensure that they come into a really welcoming environment. The clubs—our super league and championship clubs—have been working for the last six months on our new 10-year vision for the professional game. I think we have all gone through quite a big mindshift about how we do this, what we



need to do and what it looks like, which is very different from traditional men's football, perhaps.

The potential to grow revenue and develop the game is really important. We used to give away lots of tickets to get people into the stadia. They did not always show up, but we used to give them away. We do not do that any more. As you have seen from the England games, we have filled Wembley pretty well each time we have had an international game there, whether it has been a friendly game or a competitive one, and that is terrific. Indeed, I think for the USA game the tickets sold out within 24 hours of going on sale, so we know that there is now demand. You are quite right: we have to find the balance between the demand that we know is growing and the cost that starts to make it exclusive again. It needs to be inclusive.

We do not know all the answers still—we are learning—but we know that we can now generate much more revenue. Arsenal, for example, when they played Wolfsburg in the semi-final of the UEFA champion's league, actually made quite a considerable profit. We are really delighted that we are starting to get into being able to fill stadia and make profit, as opposed to filling stadia and still having a deficit. We are on a journey, I would say.

Q48 Jane Stevenson: Fantastic. Ellen, one of the big changes from when I was growing up to now, which I see in men's football as well, is that we have more female commentators on prime time. Having women who really know the game talking about men's football and women's football seems to have changed perceptions a lot. Do you feel that men's and women's football audiences will gel together? Will we see more season ticket holders at our premier league clubs just turning up for women's games as well? Do you see a big shift coming?

Ellen White: I hope we see a big shift. There was one game in particular in the Euros when we beat Spain. I think a lot of people stepped back and went, "Oh, they're not bad actually. They can play football." A lot of opinions were changed from that moment on, really. You will still get people who say that men's football is the best and have all those opinions, but I think we are making a big shift and a big change.

Playing in bigger stadiums is helping, especially in the women's super league. You are gaining more fans, and if you can do back-to-back games, that is amazing. If you can combine season tickets, that is amazing as well for pricing. It is all about growing the fan base. Obviously, we still do not know exactly how that will work, but it is a work in progress for us. If Arsenal are making a profit, it makes it more exciting and an opportunity for women's super league teams to be like, "I want to play." We keep saying the men's stadium, but it is the club's stadium. Women deserve and should have a place to be able to play in that stadium, and they should be able to grow their fan base and encourage people to come to a larger stadium to watch those games.



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It is exciting. Obviously, we are still years behind, but I feel like we are moving in the right direction and we are getting there. Hopefully, those two—men's and women's football—can combine at some point, but I feel like women's football has that much more welcoming family-like feel, which is hopefully something that really excites fans to come and watch women's football.

Jane Stevenson: Absolutely. Thank you very much.

Q49 **Clive Efford:** My question is slightly connected, but I did not know where to actually come in with it. It is really about building not just the fan base, but the people who participate and have an interest in sport in general, rather than just football. To have you here just to talk about football is wrong; you are the mother of school sport partnerships. How do we get it right or wrong in the infrastructure we have set up, in terms of both the facilities and the opportunity to take up sport from the earliest stage right the way through? The floor is yours.

Baroness Campbell: Thank you for that opening. I will support what Tanni said. I think you know well enough that I am absolutely passionate that if we do not get it right in schools, we have lost a generation of youngsters. In our primary schools we do not have specialist teachers; we have classroom teachers with minimal training in physical education.

A lot of support is needed to ensure that young people are introduced to activity and sport in a way that is fun and enjoyable and that engages them and means that they want to stay engaged. Not all of them are going to be sports stars, but we want them to be healthy, active young people. You know I am passionate about that, and I am a great believer in that infrastructure that we built. It's still there to some degree. We at the Football Association have invested in what are called the school games organisers, who replaced the old school sport partnerships. They are funded by Government three days a week, and we at the FA have bought an extra day of them, so we have one day. Where they have been on the ground, they have been brilliant.

We are now in 17,000 schools. We are offering free teacher training. We are offering lunch-time and after-school activity programmes. Our commitment is—yes, of course—to football, but it's actually to getting kids physically literate and able to enjoy activity. If they choose football, wonderful, but if they choose something else, we don't mind. That is honestly our philosophy. We have worked really hard to get our sport into schools, because we believe that if we don't get it in there, if young people don't experience it, they are not going to play it. Equally, we have packaged it in a way that is not just about football; it's about activity, learning—all the things that I care passionately and deeply about. But that infrastructure was doing a fantastic job and, as I am sure you appreciate, I would still love to see it there.

Q50 **Kevin Brennan:** I suppose the only interest I have to declare, Sue, is that you and I worked together when I was in charge of school sport as a Minister in 2007-08.



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What you have just said makes me feel angry about what we have lost—about what was being achieved and, had that pathway been continued, where we might be now, 15 years later. You have said you would prefer that infrastructure was still in place. What difference do you think it might have made had it remained in place, rather than there being the massive wrong turn that was made after 2010 on this subject?

Baroness Campbell: Whether that infrastructure as we designed it then, at that moment, with schools structured as they were, is the right one—what I do genuinely believe is that you must have a structure of people whose responsibility it is to work with schools, to engage with them, and to provide the support that teachers need. I don't think just providing guidance to schools is sufficient, because I think it requires a lot more than that.

I would love to see in this country a title IX-type concept, whereby we say any money that goes into schools for sport and physical activity, the PE and sport premium, has to be spent 50% on girls and 50% on boys and that we have equal access to every sport that girls might want to do—not just football, but every sport—because I think it is inherently within their rights to do what they want to do. The more we see cricket, rugby, hockey, netball and women's football on the television, the more girls want to play it. It is entirely wrong that they go in and are told, "It's not for you." So we have a massive job to do here.

Where would we be? Prior to 2010, we had people from all over the world visit and look at the structure we had built. I could take you to places all around the world where they have school sport partnerships, and they're working very well, thank you. So I think it would have made a massive difference, but we are where we are and we have to deal with what we have got.

Q51 **Kevin Brennan:** I won't abuse my position any further by editorialising any more on that, but I completely agree.

Ellen, you reached the top level of women's sport—of sport. What was the experience of sport in school for you and your fellow girls when you were a schoolgirl?

Ellen White: In primary school, I had to play in a boys' team. There was no women's football team, so that's how I started. When I went to secondary school, there was no women's football, so I joined the netball team. I had access to athletics, hockey and everything like that. And I played football outside secondary school. At primary school, I was doing every other sport, but women's football was not an option for me. The option was to play in a boys' team, which I very much enjoyed, but I am excited now to see—hopefully—equal access to women's sport or women's football; that is really important.

I recently went back to my local primary school, and there were about 20 young girls playing football on the field I used to play on. I felt very emotional that they were given that opportunity; it was really exciting to see that. We talk a lot about women's football, but it is all about being



active and playing any sport. It is incredible for development: you are part of a team and learning communication skills, how to build friendships and how to learn discipline. Playing any sport is vital for young people.

- Q52 **Kevin Brennan:** Thanks, Ellen. What kind of health do you think the overall structure—the pyramid, if you like—of the foundation of women’s football is in?

Baroness Campbell: I think that in grassroots terms, we are making a lot of progress, but as Ellen says, one of the stress points is the clubs. We have had this massive influx of girls wanting to play, which is fantastic, but of course that is stressing the club facility structure, so we need a good facilities strategy for the women’s game. It is also stressing the volunteer structure, because you need that coach—that person who can lead or support the women and girls. We have put a massive programme into clubs to help them be girl-friendly. That is not just about having a girls’ team; it is about thinking about environment, structure and facilities, and our counties have been rolling that out to all our clubs. Our ambition is to have 1,000 clubs by 2025 that provide a good pathway from 10 all the way through, competitively. They should be girl-friendly and have the right facilities and volunteer structure.

The area where I think we have the greatest challenge—I would put a red mark next to it—is our talent pathway. The professional game is emerging and evolving, and I am really excited by the 10-year vision that we are putting together with the clubs. In the grassroots, we are going to face challenges, but we know what they are and we are really driving change, but we haven’t got the investment we need for that ladder between the bottom of the top. As Ellen says, if we want to increase diversity, we have to make sure our talent pathway is accessible from the bottom to the top.

- Q53 **Kevin Brennan:** I was going to ask about diversity, but I think you have covered it. Some interesting written evidence was sent into the Committee from Beth Lloyd, who played age-grade football for Wales and England, and Hayleigh Boshier, who is an academic. They were talking about training facilities for women. They said: “For example, the women’s AFC Wimbledon team train at Carshalton FC, where the men’s and the boy’s teams train first. The women, who have considerably further” to travel “than the men because of the reduced opportunities for women’s teams available then train 8-10pm or later.” They said: “the women’s team was more advanced in their league than the men’s, however, they were still deprioritised.” Is that a common problem?

Baroness Campbell: Yes. We have worked with the Football Foundation, which obviously provides an enormous amount of resource to football facilities, and we have started to address those issues through the guidance and regulations that we put down when building a facility.

- Q54 **Kevin Brennan:** Do you have any real heft? If you have a successful women’s team, can you say, “You shouldn’t be making them train after 10 pm”?



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Baroness Campbell: Heft, no, I don't think we have, because the clubs are their own small businesses.

To pick up something else that Ellen said, it is not just about the training facilities. The support staff around the women are equally important. It is about having the right physical conditioning, the right medical staff and the right support staff. There is still a lot of work to do to develop infrastructure, in terms of facilities and people, that is good enough for the professionalisation of our game. The clubs are slowly awakening to the fact that, as you covered in your last session, when you are dealing with women, you are dealing with something very different, and you need to make sure the staff you are employing are equipped to deal with elite women, not elite men.

We have a lot to do on facilities, on people and on the talent pathway. We are trying to tackle all those things in different ways. For example, at the bottom end of our talent pathway, we have developed a programme called "Discover My Talent", which is working in partnership with the English Football League and the Premier League trusts—not the main clubs—reaching into communities that we as the Football Association would not reach, because they are unlikely to go near an affiliated club. We have had something like 3,000 referrals from very diverse and different cultural backgrounds.

That group is slowly coming to the bottom end of the system, but we have to have enough money to nurture them and take them through. Although I think that the pathway we have now designed is excellent, there is not good enough resource in it.

- Q55 **Kevin Brennan:** Ellen, what is your view of the potential creation of a closed league in domestic women's football, similar to the US women's league, rather than the current structure of the super league with lower divisions?

Ellen White: What do you mean by a closed league?

Kevin Brennan: It would mean no promotion or relegation. Basically, you have a franchise system, with teams that are part of just that league—it is a typical model used in American sport, or like the European super league, which would be on its own. Some people have advocated that for women's football as a way to help the game develop more rapidly.

Baroness Campbell: I can pick that one up.

Kevin Brennan: Do you want me to ask Sue first, Ellen? It is unfair to throw that question at you, but I am interested in your opinion, if you have one on it.

Ellen White: I would not agree with it, because what would the clubs in the championship or lower have to strive for? For me, it is exciting and gives a lot of opportunities to the teams in the championship and the pyramid to develop, improve and push themselves to be part of the WSL, the women's super league. I do not think that as a country we would want



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to move away from that to such a closed league. It would not be as exciting as what we already have. I think we have one of the most, if not the most, exciting leagues in the world. A closed league would take away a lot of opportunities for young people and football teams, and take away revenue and sustainability. I would not be on board with that.

Q56 **Kevin Brennan:** For clarity, I am not necessarily advocating it, but I am interested in your opinion. Sue?

Baroness Campbell: We have talked about it with the chief execs, as we have been planning this 10-year future. The difference in America is that they can close the league because they have the most amazing talent system through their education and scholarship system in higher education. If you look each year at the franchises, they pull out the best players from the university system, so they do not need a league structure, because they already have it, built through their education programmes—high school, university and varsity. We have not got that, so if you close the league up, Ellen is right, you would cut the head off the body. It is really important that we remain an open league with promotion and relegation. I think everyone is now absolutely committed to that, although I know that one or two people thought we should close the league.

Q57 **Kevin Brennan:** I have a couple of things to finish. Sue, were the higher leagues of the men's game to be regulated by a new independent regulator, should there be a separate regulator for women's football, or should it all be under the same category?

Baroness Campbell: That is a good question, and we have talked about it a lot. We think that it should be the same regulator, simply because there is such massive crossover in the ownership of men's and women's football.

Q58 **Kevin Brennan:** The same for safety at grounds? Should that come under the same regulation, under the SGSA?

Baroness Campbell: I think yes, that is right. Ellen is right: one of the things that we are trying to do is to get more women's games into what we call main stadia—as opposed to men's stadia, as Ellen pointed out—and to get more people playing in those main stadia. Safety regulation is important. When we get down the leagues, certainly to tiers 3 and 4 in the women's national league, which is an amateur structure in essence, those ground regulations are very much managed through our counties and local people, but yes, it is important that the women's game meets the same standards, definitely.

Julie Elliott: Welcome, Ellen, and hello, Sue. I have to place on the record that I have received hospitality from the FA in the past, including with Sue on the coldest day at the Stadium of Light on which I have ever watched any sport in my life.

Baroness Campbell: That was pretty grim actually.

Q59 **Julie Elliott:** Sue braved going out for the second half while I stayed



inside, but there we go.

As you know, I am very interested in the finances of the game and the financial health of women's football and its sustainability, and particularly as the women's game grows how we can avoid some of the pitfalls and mistakes that have happened in the men's game. Can you tell us where we are at the minute, Sue—how you think things are going, and are we avoiding the pitfalls?

Baroness Campbell: At the moment, the women's game is incredibly dependent on the men's clubs. There are independent clubs, but they struggle for revenue. The 10-year business plan has looked at putting the players at the centre, fans next and then community, and having a think about how those three can be developed to grow revenue. So, if we look at what we are now projecting, we believe the women's game, inside the existing structures, will be self-sustaining by '28-'29. We believe we can get there, and that will be by increasing revenue—so understanding our fanbase, getting more fans through the gates and more games in main stadia—and it is about improving our commercial proposition.

I think we are finding that in women's sport a lot of people are interested in what we call purpose-led propositions as opposed to purely transactional propositions, because they actually want to engage in the purpose, not just the output. We are starting to have some really interesting conversations and we hope—I am very optimistic—we can massively grow the commercial interest in the game. Thirdly, the broadcast deal we did with Sky, in the middle of covid, is still a very good financial deal with Sky, BBC and ITV. As we go into the next round of broadcasts we are optimistic we can get more competition and get that higher, and certainly by the following broadcast deal we believe we will start to get in enough revenue that we will be less dependent on others' money. Revenue growth is a massive part of our 10-year vision.

Q60 **Julie Elliott:** You have mentioned TV rights, in effect. On the deal this year for the FIFA world cup, did FIFA overvalue where we were or were the BBC and ITV not willing to pay that? Where do you think the problem was? I know we have a deal now, thank goodness, but it is at the eleventh hour, which is not good for anyone. Where do you think the problem was and how do you think we can avoid that for the future?

Baroness Campbell: I think a lot of the issues we are facing at present are a result of the rapid shift in the professionalisation of the women's game and the massive growth of interest, with everybody trying to work out what it is worth and what they are willing to pay. It is going at an incredibly quick pace, so I can honestly say the BBC, ITV and Sky have done a great job for women's football here, and certainly the BBC's coverage of the Euros was fantastic. FIFA is beginning to realise this: for example, the prize money for this world cup is 300% greater than ever before. It is starting to really invest in it and to want to bring more revenues in. I think this is a natural tension from the game growing; it is almost the same as the question about ticket prices—the balance between what you can afford and what you think it is worth.



Julie Elliott: That is a very diplomatic answer, Sue.

Baroness Campbell: No, honestly, I think it will evolve and people will understand its value eventually. It is a bit like we have been working on this 10-year business plan and we have put some figures up and some of the clubs have said, "Do you really think that's realistic?", and we do. We think this game has massive potential to grow and become one of the biggest, most watched sports in the world, so who knows what its ultimate value will be?

Q61 **Julie Elliott:** Looking at players' wages, a lot is being done in the WSL and you have seen a massive change in pay in your career, but there is not particularly a structure moving down. When do you think we will see women a little further down being able to live on what they earn from playing football?

Baroness Campbell: To be clear, the FA has paid the women the same as the men in appearance money. We have still some way to go to get the commercial payments equal, but we are working on it. That is about looking at sensible solutions over a medium term. I think we have a long way to go.

We need to ensure that the people who play the game are rewarded accordingly. What we can't do is pay them if we haven't got the resource to do it. It is one question in the super league. Down in the championship, it is another. We need to set minimum salaries, as well as possibly a salary cap, and I know that wouldn't be very popular, but if you want a lot of investment, we have also got to control cost. If we don't control cost, why would you invest, because each time you invest, the cost gets away from you.

We know there are some very challenging questions, but there is also a real opportunity in the women's game to do things differently—for example, talking to the clubs about working collectively rather than individually. That doesn't happen in the men's game. It is very competitive and individual. Because the women's game is where it is, we can pool everything collectively and look at how we distribute the resources we bring in, so that we can set minimum salaries and give those women a better start. Hopefully, on tier 3 and tier 4, we will get there in due course. It isn't going to be quick—it is an evolution—but there are things that we are doing now that will see a real shift in the next few years.

Q62 **Julie Elliott:** Ellen, you have now retired, but you will have seen a massive change in players' pay. Moving forward, what do you think would be the big things that would really make a difference to the pipeline of players coming through, in terms of pay, remuneration and support?

Ellen White: Obviously, the first thing is for each club to be able to gain revenue, for them to be able to pay their players a good amount of money that they can potentially live off.

The women's super league sits at the top and then the championship sits below. Obviously, the championship does not earn as much revenue or



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get as much revenue as the women's super league. The biggest thing in this country is the Lionesses. They bring in the most commercially for women's football. We have to create and build commercial viability for the women's super league to be able to pay the players.

We don't want it to run away from us, as Sue says. Obviously, there is money coming in—a lot of money coming in. We don't want it to run away from us and then for the whole thing to implode. We want to do it at a safe, steady rate. That is important for the growth and the sustainability of the women's game. We have to ensure that we have the commercial opportunities, that we have the right broadcasters who want to showcase women's football and that we have the clubs that want to support that. Then it is about gaining the fan base, and then the revenue builds from there, really. It is moving in the right direction. We just don't want it to go at a trajectory that we can't sustain.

Q63 Julie Elliott: I asked the previous panel about sexism and misogyny, and how that is currently manifesting itself in the climate of women's football. Ellen, do you think sexism and misogyny is becoming more of a problem as the popularity of the game increases? Is it getting easier, or worse? Where do you think we are with it?

Ellen White: We are still having to smash barriers. We are still having to overcome a lot of sexism and misogyny. We are still fighting it. But I do feel like things are changing and moving in the right direction.

We saw that at the Euros. People took a big look at the women's game and thought, "Okay, women's football. They are not bad. They can play football."

Social media is a massive one, isn't it? People sit behind a keyboard, and it's not nice. We need to keep talking about mental health. It's massive. It is still out there, but we need to talk about it, and make people aware. We need to make it obvious that this isn't okay and that, as women, we still feel like we are having to smash barriers and we still feel like we can't move up or step up, in different companies.

As I said before, I feel like women are now feeling empowered by the Lionesses that they can go on and achieve things. They feel empowered that they can overcome barriers of sexism. It has not gone away, but I think we are moving in the right direction.

Q64 Julie Elliott: Good. Sue, a lot has been said today about the positive, family-friendly attitude at women's domestic football. It is lovely to see. What measures is the FA putting in place to make sure that we do not lose that as the game grows? It would be a tragedy if we did; it is a wonderful thing to see and take part in.

Baroness Campbell: The culture of the women's game is very special and precious to all of us. As more commercial money comes in, we have to be very selective about the partners we work with, how we show the game, and what innovations we bring into the game. It cannot be exploitative; it has to be enriching. We should keep that culture if we can. The relationship between players and fans is fantastic. Obviously, as the



fans grow, it gets more difficult for players to have that direct link. We have to think about how we keep that link, and how we keep the culture alive as the sport expands and grows. We are passionate about it. We have written a document, "Treasuring our treasures", which looks at what is distinctive about the women's game. What makes it different? How do we make sure we retain that as we grow it and evolve it?

I want to say something about misogyny and discrimination. I am a great believer in the idea that sport can change society, and I think women's football has the power to create change. That does not mean it is easy for the players, for me, or anyone else; but if we want to change attitudes, sport is a powerful way to achieve that. All the work that the Lionesses are doing is challenging attitudes. We as the FA are massively committed to removing discrimination from our game.

- Q65 **Julie Elliott:** Finally, because we are running out of time, I turn to the huge amount of serious injury in elite women's football, particularly ACL injuries. Could you comment on research? What do you think could be done? There is clearly a problem somewhere.

Baroness Campbell: Ellen touched on this earlier: it is really important that we make sure that the people around the players are equipped with an understanding of women, elite women's bodies and attitudes, and women's psychology. This year, we are rolling out six distance learning modules to all the clubs on all the issues, including the menstrual cycle, to make sure that we are informing them. Each club will be asked to nominate someone to liaise with us, so that we can get research to them more quickly. We have had a central bank of research on club and England injuries from the last two years. Nottingham Trent University is analysing the data from last year and this year for us.

ACLs are less than 2% of injuries. The challenge is that when they happen, they are catastrophic for the individual. I have asked repeatedly, "Can somebody tell me the cause of that?" Of course, it is complex. Is it wearing men's shoes? The training surface? The over-stressed calendar, and not enough rest? Is it the kind of physical conditioning that people are doing? Our team is carefully considering putting on seminars and workshops in the clubs, with physical conditioning people, to look at the things that we know we can do to begin to tackle these issues.

There is very little research on the women's elite game, compared to men's. If you have any kind of injury in the men's game, there will be 5,000 references to that injury. In the women's game, there might be five. We are encouraging and funding more research. Women's health is absolutely central to what we are trying to do. If we do not have healthy, well looked after elite players, we are failing the game. We are taking this very seriously and doing lots of work on it.

- Q66 **Julie Elliott:** Ellen, would you like to comment on injuries in the women's game? What do you think needs to be done?

Ellen White: I certainly agree with Sue: more research needs to be done on how and why ACL injuries, or big injuries, occur. Is it the menstrual



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cycle? Is it footwear? Hopefully we can learn, and get a lot more research on why those injuries occur. Also, there has been a lot in the media about pregnancy. Can we lean on different countries? In the USA, a lot of players have come back from having babies. Can we lean on different sports to understand the training that involves, and how that changes the body? A number of things need to be done. If we start that research and look into this, hopefully we can at least aid and give guidance to those with injuries, and give them a lot of support. Support is the main thing, not just physical but mental. It is about the player.

Chair: Thank you, Sue and Ellen, for all your time today, and your answers. On behalf of the Committee, I should put on record our very best wishes to the Lionesses as they start their world cup campaign this summer. The whole country is right behind them.

Baroness Campbell: Thank you very much for the opportunity.

Ellen White: Thank you.