

Women and Equalities Committee

Oral evidence: Sexism and inequalities in sport, HC 1346

Wednesday 6 September 2023

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Members present: Caroline Nokes (Chair); Dame Caroline Dinenage; Kim Johnson; Lia Nici; Kate Osborne; Bell Ribeiro-Addy.

Questions 53 - 103

Witnesses

I: Kelly Gordon, Director of Development and Executive Lead for NETBALLHer, England Netball; Nick Pink, Chief Executive Officer, England Hockey; Jo Ward, Head of Coach Education and Qualifications, Lawn Tennis Association.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Kelly Gordon, Nick Pink and Jo Ward.

Q53 Chair: Good morning and welcome to the Women and Equalities Committee and this morning's second oral evidence session into sexism and inequality in sport. Can I thank our witnesses for coming this morning? We have Jo Ward, head of coach education and qualifications at the Lawn Tennis Association, Kelly Gordon, director of development and executive lead for the NETBALLHer programme at England Netball, and Nick Pink, chief executive officer at England Hockey. Thank you very much for coming along this morning.

As per usual Select Committee practice, Members will ask you questions in turn. They may or may not direct them to you individually, but, if you wish to come in at any point and contribute something more, please do just indicate and we will attempt to bring you in at the appropriate time.

I am going to start with Jo and just a question around the taboos that exist when it comes to talking about menstrual cycles, what particularly your organisation is doing to try to tackle that and how much more there is to do.

Jo Ward: First of all, I would just like to say that I am really pleased to be here, so thank you for the invite. Having played professional tennis a long time ago, I have seen this change at first hand in our sport. I retired



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in 2000, so I was playing in the late 1990s, and back then the menstrual cycle and those sorts of issues were something that we just endured in silence. We did not talk about them. We played through them and, despite any anxiety we had around those issues, we just carried on regardless.

What I am really pleased to say now is that, in our sport, we are taking the stigma out of those conversations, because, if we can bring them to the forefront of everything that we are doing with our female athletes, we have an opportunity to educate and support on this front.

In some ways, as an individual sport, there is a limitation to what we can mandate. I have watched one of the previous editions of this Committee talk about using apps and so on. We cannot mandate that with our individual athletes, but we can provide support, recommendations and education. We have a female athlete advisory group within our elite set-up with our athletes, and they provide the latest research and recommendations to our best female players.

In fact, they went to the female players and said, "What format do you want this education in?" and the general consensus was that, for players who are travelling on the road, podcasts were their preferred method, so we produced a series of podcasts for those athletes. We also provide access to expert sports gynaecologists, so that the athletes can go directly to them for more specific information and expert medical advice.

Q54 Chair: Can I ask you a question on that? How many expert sports gynaecologists are there out there?

Jo Ward: I do not know. My field is coach education, and these insights have come from conversations with our performance team. It is a long time since I have been involved in the world of performance. I sat there listening to this, coming back from our performance team, just thinking, "I wish I had been a professional tennis player in today's society rather than in the late 1990s", because things have vastly changed.

Q55 Chair: One of the questions that we have around that is that, although there are experts out there, there is still an inadequate level of research and understanding. Is the LTA doing anything to make sure that there is better research and understanding out there?

Jo Ward: Absolutely, so we are sector-leading in some areas. In sports science, for example, we are one of the only NGBs, if not the only one, to be published in the field of RED-S, where one of our practitioners has three or four publications.

Just to finalise what is happening in the performance world, because I really want to do justice to the amazing work that they are doing, our players have annual screening, which is part of their overall support package, where elements like hormones and menstruation are all taken into account within the bigger picture of that athlete support.



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If I could just talk very briefly about what is happening on my side of the building within the LTA, back in 2017 we started to invite experts on the topic of menstruation and how we can support our female players. That was around the time that we started to hear conversations within coach education around menstruation more specifically within international conferences and so on.

As a result, that has cascaded down in terms of education through webinars and various elements of coach education into our wider coach workforce. We have 6,500 accredited coaches, and it is my job to ensure that all of them have sufficient education at their level around this and many other topics, so elements like this are within our qualifications and our broader training package for coaches.

Q56 Chair: What support are you giving to male coaches to make it easier for them to have conversations around it?

Jo Ward: On the performance side of things, the team of sports scientists that I mentioned do not just liaise with the female players. They also provide education to the male and female coaches, so we have that triad between our sports scientist, our athlete and their coaching support team.

On our side of things—coach education—the majority of our coaches are still male, although we are working really hard to drive female coach numbers, so a lot of the support in this area has been to male coaches.

Kelly Gordon: Thank you for inviting us. I am pleased to be here. I echo what Jo said. Back in the day, when we talked to our athletes, talk of menstrual cycles and periods was taboo. Eboni was at the last Committee meeting and talked a lot about the support she has received in the last 15 years as a player and also returning post pregnancy.

We have certainly done a lot over the last 15 years, but what we recognised more recently is the dropout rates, particularly at puberty, in terms of conversations around periods and how girls feel about their bodies. We have developed an initiative called NETBALLHer, which is all about supporting the female body and trying to break those taboos that girls and women experience at all life stages.

In terms of the taboo, we are starting to find that people are more open to talking about periods and menstrual cycles. It is less talked about in school; there is less education in school. We are going to pick up on that later on, but there is a huge way to go in terms of education for girls at school. What we can try to do is to change that for netballers and bring education to them.

The work that we are doing is from the elite all the way down to grassroots players. We support the elite athletes—the Roses—through daily apps. I know that Jo referenced apps, which we use for the players. That is very personalised and they have their adapted programme based



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on their menstrual cycle. It then goes all the way down through super league and right down to grassroots.

It is trickier with grassroots, because we are still trying to get that education down there around the importance of talking about periods and menstrual cycles. The way that we position this is that it is a positive thing. People talk about periods as being a negative thing, as this thing that you cannot talk about and as a thing that happens to a woman's body, but it should be a positive thing. It is a woman's superpower and something that we should really be explaining to young girls as a positive before it suddenly happens to them. We are trying to do a lot of work on that. It is a real focus for us around puberty.

The other big area for us is coaching. At the moment, education on female health and the female body is not in our qualifications, but we have just launched a learning offer, which is purely on female health across all life stages. It is standalone at the moment and is going to be embedded into all our coaching qualifications.

That is the coaches who are out there working with the netballer, but what we find is really important is that we educate our staff. It is one thing having education for the coaches, but we need our England Netball workforce to be able to also have those conversations with coaches and with the players, so we are also educating our members of staff on how to have conversations around the female body and female health.

Q57 Chair: Your programme on women's physiology is standalone at the moment. How long will it be before that is embedded?

Kelly Gordon: In the next 12 months.

Chair: Okay, so quite quickly.

Kelly Gordon: Yes. We just launched internally with staff first, because we feel they should have the education first. We are then launching it to members in the next two weeks. Over the next year, we are embedding it into all of our qualifications.

Q58 Chair: I will ask the same question about research. England Netball is looked at as pretty much being the gold standard, but are you commissioning specific research, or have you in the past?

Kelly Gordon: Similarly to the way that Jo explained, the high performance team has commissioned research. In particular, we have done some work with Portsmouth University around the importance of bras and having bra fittings. At the World Cup this year, we had Portsmouth University come in, aligned to Nike, and did a full bra fit for all of the Roses. We have worked with them on the importance of wearing a sports bra and bespoke bras.

We have also done some work with Swansea University on puberty and education within schools. We are also doing a lot of work with The Well



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HQ. Baz Moffat presented last time. Although they are not researchers in their own right, they have access to a lot of research that we then lean on to develop our own resources.

Nick Pink: Good morning and thanks for having us here this morning. It is such an important area, so it is great to be able to contribute alongside colleagues here. My comments are very similar in very many ways to what representatives from the LTA and NETBALLHer were saying. If I talk about some of the differences, you can then come back to wherever else you would like me to go.

On the research side, we partner with the UK Sports Institute, which I know has been part of discussions and conversations with this Committee previously. I would strongly recommend that they are featured as a UK sport in this, because the science and medicine side of our sport is almost outsourced to their specialism, so we gain significantly. They roll across sports. They also work with netball. They were recently branded from EIS to UK Sports Institute, just for the record.

The benefit of that is that we get the cross-sport benefit, not just the hockey benefit, which is pretty significant. We can then leverage off those that are perhaps slightly ahead of us, such as netball and some of the other sports in the system. We are also able to do similar pilots or activities that Kelly mentioned, particularly in relation to menstrual cycles and their impact on performance. There may be a hockey-specific element, but there may also be other sports that benefit from that, which we learn from. There is significant research in areas that the UK Sport Institute has leveraged and developed.

We are also in the space around coach education. We are in a very similar space to netball. We are trying to get into the content at the grassroots level, but we have started at the elite level with our advanced coaching programme. That is a bit of a learning exercise for us to understand what type of content and how far we should go in the area around women's health specifically. That is important learning for us as we start to develop content that we will share, and start to develop coaching content at the grassroots.

The other bit that I would point to is that we have changed our kit regulations in the sport. We have pretty much a 50/50 balance of male and female participation in the sport of hockey in the country. Around 160,000 adults participate in the sport weekly throughout the season, which is starting shortly, with 50/50 representation. At the beginning of the year, we changed our kit regulations, which, essentially, allowed any athlete, although this was particularly aimed at female athletes, to wear whatever they most feel comfortable in.

Particularly in hockey, it was the skort that was being worn, but we are allowing athletes to wear skirts, shorts or whatever they feel comfortable in. We were able to change the regulations at the international level with the International Hockey Federation—the FIH—and the European



championships, which we just participated in at the end of August in Germany, were the first time where our international female athletes were able to wear shorts, as three or four of them did.

We saw that as an important step, and one of our players, Tess Howard, has, with her own PhD research, been heavily involved in understanding what, essentially, puts girls off participating in sport. A lot of the questions that you have been pointing to are exactly those that she has been answering. She helped us to shape the changes that we have been looking to make, and so we have been using her empirical evidence to support that direction. It is a great way of connecting elite athletes to some of the changes that we see in the sport going forward.

Q59 Chair: There is a 50:50 balance in participation. Do you know what the gender split is in terms of coaches?

Nick Pink: It is a bit less than that. It is 30:70, and the 30% is growing, which means that the 70% is reducing. We are seeing it growing quite significantly at grassroots level, with quite significant changes. I have some of the data in front of me, if I can read it without my glasses on. Essentially, what we see is about a third to two thirds, or 30:70, across the board, until we get to the elite level. At the elite level, about two in every 15 coaches are female, which is something that we are looking to address with the advanced coaching programme that I just mentioned.

Q60 Chair: With your advanced coaching programme, how are you helping those male coaches have the conversations around—I hate saying this—taboo subjects like periods?

Nick Pink: That is exactly right. Very similarly to what Kelly and Jo were saying, it is about being upfront with those conversations and not hiding behind them. It is about, as you say, giving the confidence to those coaches to address it.

The kit regulation changes have helped, and activities and changes that we make to the sport that enable the coaches to address those upfront in a form is really helpful. We work through that with our colleagues from the UK Sports Institute. We have performance lifestyle coaches who support both male and female athletes to think about their careers beyond sport. Invariably, it is pastoral support while they are still participating as an elite athlete. We have different means and mechanisms to support those coaches through those conversations.

Q61 Chair: Kelly, you referenced the app, and we heard from Eboni about it. I cannot remember who was talking to us about New Zealand rowing using very careful monitoring of athletes so that they could understand the menstrual cycle better to maximise performance. How does that work and what are you doing to help share that knowledge with other sports?

Kelly Gordon: On the first part of the question, with the app that the Roses—our elite players—use, they monitor their menstrual cycle daily. As I said before, they then adapt the training programme based on their cycle. It is always tricky as a team sport, because girls have periods at



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different times and they have to try to manage what that means in terms of load, but the research is very strong that it is better to be weightbearing at certain parts of your cycle, when you are feeling super strong, but then to take the pressure off the joints when your oestrogen levels are high, which is pre-bleed. It is very much designed around the individual athlete at the Roses level.

Where it becomes trickier is then landing that down in the pathway, because it takes resource and finances to be able to fund that. We are doing work with the super league clubs—the highest level of club—to follow that same process. Again, we are going to embed a female health screening process that every single athlete will go through, and they will have programmes that are adapted to their individual needs.

We are then rolling that down through NETBALLHer and through our programmes. Although it is not as extreme for a young girl playing in a club, we want to make sure that, even at that level, there is some screening, so that, where there are signs of RED-S—relative energy deficiency—which Jo mentioned, they will be flagged at a younger age. One of the problems is that the education is not at the younger age. By the time that they have got to the Roses, in our case, the education is too late, so we are trying to get the education in at a younger age. I am not saying that apps are going to be embedded into clubs, but the education will be.

Q62 Chair: Do you have any other sports pitch up and ask you about it?

Kelly Gordon: Lots have recently, although in a really good way. All of the resources that I have talked about have been developed in partnership with The Well HQ and written by experts, and we can take comfort from the fact that the information we are putting out there is medically sound. We are the only sport to go all in. Although there are brilliant pockets of examples, like the stuff we have heard about today, we have gone full on, from Roses down to the grassroots, and also, as I said, internally.

In a really good way, we have had other sports asking, “Can we use your resources?” Absolutely, the website is open to anybody to go on there. The learning offer that we are developing is, at the moment, locked down for members only, because we want to support our netball family first, but, over time, we will probably roll that out beyond netball.

One thing that is really important for us is that our sport has an unapologetic focus on females, and we do not have the same challenges of male coaches. We are predominantly a female workforce, although we do have males and male umpires, but we should be changing the system for women and girls. That should be our role.

In particular, I very strongly believe that we should be working with other sports, and not just Sport England, but the Youth Sport Trust. Next week or the week after, we have a group coming together cross-sector that is



looking at puberty together. Rather than it just being netball developing our own resources, what should we do collectively as a sector to address this problem? We are netball, at the end of the day, but we do have a role to play in changing the system for women and girls.

Q63 Chair: We heard from athletes in a whole range of disciplines about the use of hormonal contraception to stop or delay periods, or to schedule the timing of their period and so on. There are some real advantages in being able to do that. I am going to open this to any of you to answer first. Is there enough information available about the potential pros and cons of doing that? If there is not, who should be leading the research on it?

Jo Ward: Given the information that I have already shared around access to gynaecologists with a sport expertise and so on, we are confident that our elite athletes are getting the right recommendations, information and support. In November, we have what I think is the first sports gynaecology conference or symposium, which we are hosting. It is a cross-sport event and will be an opportunity to drive forward the research around this area.

From what I am being told by our experts internally, we do, of course, provide advice and guidance to our female athletes. One of the cons of hormonal contraception is a potential reduction in aerobic capacity. As a non-endurance sport, that is not an issue that we feel affects our athletes in tennis, but, of course, we provide all the advice and guidance when our athletes ask for it.

Nick Pink: Again, without trying to outsource the point, it is the UK Sports Institute that provides the science and medicine support to our athletes at the elite levels specifically. Very similarly to what Jo was saying, we would take their support and advice and, very much in relation to that, their evidence and research that is based on it. Even our chief medical officer, who we have on a part-time basis two to three days a week, will be using the evidence and research from the UK Sports Institute.

We try to do as much as possible to understand the impact of hormone treatment and other things in relation to that. We would be following all of their recommendations and working through it with as much research background as possible.

Kelly Gordon: Similarly, from the Roses' perspective, we provide one-to-one education in terms of where they are at in their life stage. It becomes trickier going down to the grassroots level with younger girls having conversations around when to start the pill and what that means for them. That is trickier because, if you are at an elite level, you have some understanding of your body, although that will vary, dependent on the sport that you are in and the support you are getting.



We are trying to get that education about choice in at a younger age. A young woman needs to understand their own body and work out what is right for them, and the pros and cons. None of us is a medical expert in terms of understanding the pros and cons of going on the pill. That should be the choice of the individual. The only way that they can make that choice is if they are educated about their body and they understand the menstrual cycle, what that means and the long-term impact of that.

We do not talk enough about what that means in the longer term. For me, it is education at a younger age. I know that I have said it a couple of times, but we need to do that before they become elite athletes. Some of them will never become elite athletes. It is just about, as women, understanding your body and knowing what is right and what is your choice.

Q64 Chair: You have used the word “choice”. Is there any evidence from any of your disciplines of athletes being pressurised to take hormone contraception?

Kelly Gordon: I have not heard that.

Q65 Chair: How are you empowering them to make the choice, effectively?

Nick Pink: I am pausing for a second to make sure that I consider the points. Do I feel that they are pressured? No, I do not think that they are. It is more in a supportive capacity so they understand, a little bit like Kelly was saying, the choices that are there and where that could help support them, whether that sits at the performance level and preparing for something related to a particular competition or event, or day-to-day life.

The bit that I was just reflecting on is the impact and the ability to support that at an elite level, when we have all the support around that elite athlete, compared to what we do not have at the grassroots level, to what Kelly was saying. With the education and support that we need to provide at that level, we need to be careful and considerate around the impact that that might have on that individual and the support that is in place for them. What is the provision at school? What is the provision at, in our context, the hockey club? There would probably not be a lead for science, medicine, physiology, psychology and everything else, as we might have at the elite level. It is about understanding that balance, and that is where we can learn from the collective here in terms of what we need to do.

Kelly Gordon: Just to add to that point, when having that conversation around the pill or periods, there are massive cultural barriers within that, which we all really need to consider. Going back to the first question around being taboo, it still is, generally in society, and we have given examples of where we are trying to break that down. In certain cultures, it is just not talked about. We really need to consider not only how we even have the conversation, but whether we should be having the



conversation and how we have those conversations in relation to certain cultural groups.

Q66 **Chair:** What sort of training do you give around that?

Kelly Gordon: At the moment, we are commissioning research. We have just set up some focus groups. We have to listen to the end user. We are literally now in the process of talking to different cultural groups. We have a group of Muslim women in Birmingham who we are talking to. We have some asylum seekers in Manchester who we are talking to, and a mix across the country, just to hear their lived experience.

What we are hearing so far—and we have yet to conclude the research—is a lot of peer-to-peer, so having particularly girls from those communities talking to other girls from those communities. We are not experts in this and we have to hold our hands up and say that we are at the start of the journey. We cannot get it all right at the start, so we have to acknowledge where the gaps are and try to do something about it.

Jo Ward: The thing that resonates with me sat here is that, certainly across these three sports, the elite athlete space is the one where we feel like we can offer the most support. We can provide specific sport science and access to experts, and that support is absolutely bespoke to the athlete, whether they be female or male, and all things are taken into consideration.

Where we all have some work to do—and this is where my main focus is—is in ensuring that that cascades down into the grassroots. We are a slightly different sport, in that we have a largely self-employed workforce among the 6,500 coaches. It is my job to ensure that everything we are doing, and, of course, all of the cross-sport work—which I do not think I have done well enough, so I have already earmarked these two for some conversations afterwards—cascades down to the right level for the right coaches.

In tennis, when you go into a club, a park or a venue, it is often the coach who is your point of contact. It is the coach who can signpost you to other people to play with or to provide coaching and so on. We need to train and educate our coaches, because they are the ones who will cascade that out on our behalf to players and parents.

Q67 **Kate Osborne:** Good morning, everyone. My first question is for you, Jo. This year, the All England Club altered its 146-year-old dress code for players at Wimbledon to alleviate period anxiety. You said earlier that it was not really discussed when you were playing. I just wondered if you could tell us a bit more about whether the players discussed it between themselves and how much of a concern it was.

Jo Ward: I cannot speak to what the players are doing these days. I am not connected in those circles.

Kate Osborne: What about in your own experience?



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Jo Ward: We did not discuss it in those days. It was a conversation that was almost taboo between female athletes. We would, when needed, borrow products from one another and have conversations where we were absolutely desperate, but we never got together and said, “I wish these rules could be changed”.

From my point of view, I absolutely support the All England decision to change the rule. From an LTA perspective, of course we support that. Anything that enables all players—specifically, in this instance, female players—to feel more comfortable on court and to play tennis to their best in their own way is fantastic.

We are also making huge strides in tennis to try to slightly change the perceptions of tennis more generally. I come from a working-class town in the north-east. I am probably not your traditional tennis player who has gone on to play pro and had a life in tennis. We are absolutely committed to making sure that any and all opportunities are available for anybody who wants to pick up a racket and play the sport.

We have a Play Your Way campaign, where we send the message loud and clear that anybody anywhere can play tennis, wearing what they want, and play how they want and so on. Those messages are really important to the wider tennis population.

If I can just go back to performance very quickly, certainly within the circles of our elite athletes and their coaches, we have provided an every body guidance piece of education, where we talk to them specifically about elements around health and maturation, weight, body image and eating disorders and so on—all those issues around feeling comfortable on court, how we present ourselves and what we wear are wrapped up in that.

More generally, as an individual sport, we do not mandate what people wear. It was very interesting listening to Nick about uniforms and changes in dress code more generally. We do not mandate a uniform in tennis, other than a very small minority of times when you might have to wear a certain colour. Athletes can wear what they want and feel comfortable in, presenting themselves in skirts, shorts or skorts. We continue to work really hard in this space, and we are onboard with any evolutions that happen within the wider world of tennis with the All England or the WTA.

Q68 **Kate Osborne:** Do you think enough is being done generally across all levels around period anxiety in particular?

Jo Ward: This all comes down to education and what I was mentioning earlier to the Committee around making sure that we cascade that education down from where it is being done really well at the elite level, and that we normalise conversations through our coaches, parents and players all the way through the pathway.



Success for me in my role is for young girls to pick up a racket and be playing tennis in an environment where, when they have their first period or have an issue with period anxiety or anything in this space, it is a normal conversation to be had with the coach or with players, and the support is available for them when they need it. That is my ambition in this space, as well as many of the other things that we are trying to do.

Q69 Kate Osborne: Kelly and Nick, what steps are you taking to alleviate sportswear period anxiety among girls in your sports and to encourage participation? What are the concerns around dress code protocols for girls and women specifically in netball and hockey?

Kelly Gordon: We asked players, from elite right the way through to grassroots, "What would you like to play netball in?" The Roses chose to wear the dress; that was their choice. They felt that it was powerful to wear a dress and, at that the World Cup this year, they all chose to wear the dress, but it was their choice. There is going to be a common theme here of choice.

We then looked at the feedback from the grassroots level. Those who are regular netballers through and through want to wear a dress. For them, it is the pride of uniform and they want to wear that club dress. Those who are more social and want to turn up and play just want choice, and so they want to have a kit choice that is inclusive, whether that is leggings or shorts, T-shirts or vest tops. The common theme that came through was still uniforms. They still wanted to look the same and be part of something—that sense of belonging and being part of a club—but they wanted it to be in a way that they felt comfortable.

Our guidance is choice. As I said, the Roses have chosen to wear the dress, but, across the rest of the pathway, it is choice. One of the areas that we are looking at is kit suppliers. Where we have players saying they want choice but want it to be a vest top with the club on it and leggings, we need a supplier with the breadth of kit, with an affordable price tag on it, to offer that choice. Now that we have done the research and know what the players want, we have to try to activate that, and that is the next challenge for us.

Nick Pink: I was interested in Jo's comment about tennis and uniform usage. It will be different per sport. Something that we identified pretty early on was the need to change the regulations that I mentioned a moment ago, which we did at the beginning of the year, and allow anybody to wear what they feel most comfortable in, which is really important.

It was backed up by the research I mentioned by Tess and others who have looked into this in some detail. To your question, the difference that that makes, particularly for young girls going through puberty and menstrual cycles for the first time, and also continuing through, is pretty significant.



Therefore, I see this as definitely something that hockey can change, and we are doing our best to make sure that that happens. We have influenced the change at the international level. Interestingly, not a single nation that competes in international hockey had changed any of its regulations in that time. In the feedback that we have had generally through social media, you have the generally supportive community saying, "Fantastic, this is great", and the other side saying, "Why are we even doing this now in 2023?" I can completely empathise with and understand that when you think about it, but you have to make a step change. You have to do it at some stage.

Fundamentally, the bit that I always reflect on is that, generally, the first opportunity for any young girl to participate in sport comes into a school environment, so we have to make sure that we get the balance right. We have a role to play in that, because hockey is played in schools, by making sure that the opportunity is not taken away by something that is prescribed in terms of uniform or a form of kit. That is particularly at the participatory level.

We have talked about performance and elite level. If you are talking about participatory level, it is about getting young people to participate in sport and physical activity. We know all the benefits of that, and I can certainly talk about those until they come through, but, if we take away the opportunity for people to have that choice, as Kelly says, and work with suppliers to make sure those changes are put in place, how on earth are we going to make sure that people are participating in sport and physical activity, whether it is hockey, netball, tennis or whatever else it might be? We have to make those changes.

Q70 Kate Osborne: My next question is to all of you, but I will come to Nick first. You just mentioned Tess Howard, and her recent study found an alarming number of girls and women leaving sport because of body image concerns relating to sportswear, including feeling sexualised. Former England footballer Jill Scott, from the north-east, where my constituency is, started in Boldon and has raised concerns around body image, saying that the sad reality is that girls leave the sport at a faster rate than boys because of body confidence. Of course, dictating that a girl or a woman must wear a particular type of sports clothing that they are uncomfortable with cannot be justified, and I am really pleased to hear you talking about choice so much. What actions have been taken to stop that happening? What more needs to be done to get that parity between men and women in terms of sportswear expectations?

Nick Pink: That is a really good question. I will not repeat anything I have said, but the point is that, in her research, Tess has looked back at why kit was regulated in the way that it was in the first place. If you look at the reasons and the traditional cultural experience that was probably taken back to Victorian times, when a lot of these regulations were put in place and a lot of our organisations were started and formed, it comes



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down to that point that you make around the sexualisation of sport and its patriarchal nature.

Why are we continuing to operate in that form today when regulations and rules have been set for over 150 years in that space? We have to break those down. It is about leading with what we have in our gift, if you like, and Jo was talking about the elite level and the influence around that. We are just changing our kit provider and moving from Adidas to Mizuno. That is perfectly natural. There is nothing wrong with Adidas at all, but we have gone through a cycle of change. In that change process, particularly with female athletes, we are going into the devil of detail around fibre and what they feel comfortable wearing. In hockey, slightly different to netball in terms of what Kelly was saying, there is a vest and a short-skirt or short option that we are now putting in place. It is about making sure that the vest top is comfortable and something that the athletes feel able to compete in and do not have to worry about competing in, to all the points that Tess makes in her research.

It is about working with the provider around that, and the story and the messaging then becoming not just about our new partner, Mizuno, and this fantastic story—which, of course, it is—but about what we have done and the journey of change. That is really important for people to understand. If we do that at elite level, why on earth can that not be done at every single level within sport and physical activity? There is a little bit of role modelling that we need to do around that too.

Kelly Gordon: Going back to the original point, 70% of girls drop out of sport during puberty and do not return, which is twice the amount of boys. We just have to do something about that. We need to further unpick that and ask, “Why is that?” Teenage girls go through body changes. There is a stat around 73% of girls not playing sport because they do not like being watched. All of this change suddenly happens to their body.

Repeating what I said before, we have to educate girls before they get to that point. We need to get girls to a position where they feel comfortable about their bodies. Not every girl is going to feel comfortable within their body, but they need to have the education of what is happening within their body. With that education, they then need to have the choice of what to wear. It is about providing not just the kit but the education with the choice of kit.

The other part that we have not talked about is the importance of sports bras. Young girls have no education on sports bras. We hear—and I am sure that we have personal experience of this—of girls not even knowing that they should wear a sports bra, or doubling up. We hear a lot about finishing the school day and just putting another bra on top of it. Breast issues are really high in girls, and is a highly stated reason not to take part in PE. It is about that simple education of, “It is really important to wear a sports bra, and you can go and get one from your high street



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store, as long as you know the correct size”, right the way up to the extreme of buying a really expensive one.

On the NETBALLHer website, we have a little video that shows how to measure yourself and to download an infographic that takes the girl or lady step by step through how to measure and how to select the right sports bra. It is not just superficially what you wear, but the bra, the education and the understanding of your body, and that all needs to be pieced together.

Jo Ward: This is a topic that I am very passionate about. I have been working for the LTA for four years, before which I was embarking on a PhD. My PhD topic is looking at the psychological effect of gender stereotypes on competitive female junior tennis players—you need a PhD just to say the title!

Throughout the course of those studies, I looked at all of the different pulls out of sports that girls face and boys just do not. I could talk about it all day, but I will not, because I know that we are time-limited here. This area of research is primarily why I took this job—to have an impact on the lives, opportunities and careers for female players and coaches.

We produced a coach education workshop, “Coaching Females: Research and Practical Applications”, and we looked at the psychosocial elements—the mental differences and similarities between coaching girls and boys, as well as the physical, tactical and technical. We did the full suite.

In that psychosocial piece, we talked to coaches about how sport does not speak to girls in the way that it speaks to boys. We gave them, for example, some dos and don’ts in terms of their coaching practice. There is quite an interesting piece in that workshop around Barbie, and it is quite interesting now that there is a Barbie movie, which I have not seen yet and I must. We talked about how coaches need to help them suspend some of the cultural or social influences on girls around femininity and what that means when they walk through the gate into a tennis venue. If you reinforce it, even accidentally, then all you are doing is communicating the notion that she is valued for how she looks. When she feels like she does not look like she perhaps wants to, that is when the body confidence starts to go and she starts to think about leaving sport.

We gave coaches a checklist on things to say and not say, and things to do and not do. We asked them to go home and do an audit of their venue—a physical audit of the walls. Is your club infrastructure speaking to girls? Are there empowering pictures of female athletes on the walls doing this, or doing countercultural things, not standing there looking necessarily pretty in their little skirts and whatever?

What you find in a lot of sports venues generally is that sport is still a male domain. There is research in primary schools, where children were asked to draw an athlete, and they overwhelmingly drew a man. We



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asked them to do an audit of their promotional materials as well. Is your website speaking to female players and their parents?

We have been working hard with coaches to try to get them to understand that they are far more empowered than they think they are in terms of reinforcing what they might feel are not negative cultural messages to girls but really are, or they can change them and become countercultural in their approach.

I delivered a lot of those workshops myself and found that I would look out across the sea of coaches in the room. The women would all be standing there nodding, and it would resonate deeply, and the men would always come to me after and say, "Do you know? I am a father of daughters and I have been telling my daughter how pretty she looks for ages. I thought I was doing a nice thing". I said, "Well, you are doing a nice thing, but there are bigger things at play here."

Maybe with the exception of netball, because you do not have the split gender, all sports have some work to do to make sure that we continue to drive that narrative around how individual sports, as well as sport more generally as a collective, speak to girls.

Kelly Gordon: We do have a way to go by far, because girls still have parents, on the whole. The women in sport research that has been done absolutely reinforces that: that there are gender stereotypes and how parents perceive the difference between girls and boys. Regardless of the sport, we have all a role to play in trying to change that narrative, but not the same challenges in that way.

Nick Pink: I meant to mention Sport England's "This Girl Can" campaign. The different iterations of it have been incredibly important, going back to your original question, in terms of thinking about the impact that that can have. A campaign is one thing, though, and it must fall into funding, activation and delivery in terms of some of the changes.

I would echo Jo's point at the end that we all know that we have way more to do here. We are beyond the starting point; there is definitely more recognition and awareness; there is more research in play, but there is far further to go. This is an open place in terms of us wanting to step into that to understand what we should be doing more of to engage that young person group that you were talking to.

Q71 **Kate Osborne:** Thank you all. Earlier in the inquiry, we heard how women are too often having to use football boots that are designed for men, causing not only discomfort but injury at times as well. I just wondered if you could all tell us whether there are similar concerns around the availability of appropriate sportswear for women.

Jo Ward: I am not a footwear expert. In my particular case, we tend to look for footwear matched to the shape and size of the feet, not necessarily gendered, but I do not know any more than that. More



generally, there are still instances in some sports where team kit providers outside of our control within the LTA, whether the kit be for a university, a county association or whoever, just treat girls as small boys. That has always been a problem. Back in the days when I was playing for teams, we would have to try to clip it up or tie it up. We would go on court wearing what felt like a tent at the time. There is still more work to do in this space.

Kelly Gordon: It is probably less of an issue for us as a sport. The kit that a netballer wears is predominantly for females. We associate with EMMNA, which is the mixed side of the sport, where there are more men and mixed games, but, on the whole, the kit and footwear for netball is predominantly for females. The brands that netballers use tend to be a female shoe.

Like all sports, we still have an issue with injury, but that is not related to the kit. It is just that women are more likely to have ACL injuries, and so it is the broader support that we need to put around the woman to prevent injury, which is specifically for us around the kit.

Nick Pink: Very similarly to netball, because of the participation base being 50:50, a lot of the kit suppliers have both female and male footwear, and it is very much delineated that way. We are also into the teamwear space for a lot of the kit that is provided to hockey players. Again, that dual usage is there and very much specified for male and female athletes.

While there is less of a concern or issue on that front, there is more of a concern or issue, to the point that Kelly makes, about general injury that might come from participating in sport and understanding that direction of travel.

Q72 Dame Caroline Dinenage: Nick, in the report that Tess Howard did and quite a lot of the media around it, she spoke about how her work has been very well received, particularly by England Hockey, but also internationally. One thing that she said in some of the interviews around it is that no hockey brands make shorts specifically for women. You have spoken about how you are looking at your own kit provider, but, at a grassroots level, surely that is a problem.

Nick Pink: That is part of the change. If kit providers have been, for the last however many years, targeted towards producing a skirt for performance hockey play, this is almost the start of changing some of that that we are going through. One of the changes that we are making with our own provider is to make sure that the short that is put in place is very much female specific and does everything that Tess points to in your question.

Even for those athletes who wore shorts at the European championships that I mentioned, which took place only a couple of weeks ago, they had



to be tailored specifically to make sure that they were comfortable and appropriate for their performance wear.

- Q73 Dame Caroline Dinanage:** To what extent are you having conversations with sportswear providers that will be providing the local high street sports shops that young girls and women will be shopping in?

Nick Pink: That is a good question. First, with our new providers, if we have not got it right at the elite level, how on earth are we going to influence any change at the high street level particularly? We are already seeing and noticing it. There were about four or five different providers at the European championships that I saw just recently, and each of them is now starting to make the changes, because they are getting the inquiries from clubs, international teams and others to satisfy the changes that are now taking place internationally and, for us, domestically.

The biggest influence that we have had is by changing the regulations and now starting to see that change happen at the international level. The kit providers then have to fall in line because the demand is now coming towards them to say, "We want this, please". Of course, there is an economic model that sits beside that for them.

In terms of what we can do more of, it is back to the question that Kate was asking around role modelling. We need to make sure that we are shining the light on and generating the media interest in these stories, not just, "Didn't England do well? They won 2-1", or we might have lost in that context. There are other stories that sit behind that. It is about making sure that the stories relate to the changes that we are looking at and the impact that we want from those changes.

- Q74 Dame Caroline Dinanage:** England Hockey is to be commended, because it is your changes to the uniform guidelines that have provoked the international uniform guideline changes. To what extent do each of you feel that the international situation is reflecting what is happening in the UK? To what extent are we a trailblazer and is the rest of the world on the same page?

Nick Pink: There are a number of other issues that we could touch on there. I often find that there is a lot of synergy with my colleagues in the US, Australia, New Zealand and some parts of Europe, but it is interesting how some parts of Europe are perhaps slightly different in the context of championing, in this case, appropriate changes in regulations to support women's participation in sport—in our context, hockey.

It is different in different parts of the world, but there is certainly a lot of synergy in those nations that I mentioned at the start. We are almost completely aligned in what we are looking to try to influence and change at an international level.

- Q75 Dame Caroline Dinanage:** Do the rest of you agree?



Kelly Gordon: Yes, with everything that Nick said, from the suppliers through to the international point. Interestingly, though, as Nick said before, Australia and New Zealand have both offered choice at the national level. Every team at the World Cup wore a dress, but it was their choice to. We are all falling in line. The challenge comes, as we said before, with the kit suppliers for grassroots, and that is definitely about supply and demand.

What we have to watch is the price point, because the business model has to stack up for all those suppliers. We do not want the price inching up, because that goes against the inclusion point, so we have work to do in working with the breadth of suppliers, but that is starting to change. Also, the more sports that do it, the better. There are not that many sports providers that are just one sport, so the more we can work on that together, the better.

Jo Ward: It is slightly different in tennis. We are an individual sport. We are, I would say, very fortunate in that we have been leading the charge in being a more gender-balanced sport historically, with trailblazers like Billie Jean King and so on. We have very many high-profile female athletes who will all have endorsements with companies that kit them out and want to sell all the clothing in shops.

I am just listening and reflecting that, again, going back to what I was saying about my previous PhD research, if young girls want to go into a sports shop and buy sportswear to wear when playing in their local clubs, whatever their sport is, it does not feel like the provision is the same. I am now back playing competitive sport myself. I play a lot of padel, so I have now been that consumer of sportswear, where I am going into the sports shops and trying to find not only sex-appropriate but age-appropriate wear for me. It feels like a lot of the sportswear that is available to me to buy is perhaps based on more of an aesthetic modelling than a performance modelling. Just generally, within culture, there is some work to do there too.

Q76 **Dame Caroline Dinenage:** On that point, funnily enough, I was going to ask to what extent kit designers, but also the media, are your friend in these instances. For example, I just did a little bit of googling on what people were saying about women's tennis outfits this year at Wimbledon. "A white perforated Nike dress has taken the competition by storm this week", but it caused some controversy. "People are sick of seeing it, and some have compared the racerback dress to a doily, lampshade and even a 'pair of curtains'...Some fashion experts have defended the design...I think the body-con top and voluminous layered skirt creates a really flattering silhouette combo". To what extent are the sports media friends of your sport when they write articles like that?

Jo Ward: I like the dress taking the world by storm and not the player within it. Women in sport are under the same sorts of pressures that women in any public life are, where they are often written and talked about in terms of how they look and not necessarily their performance



within their roles. I cannot speak to all sports writers, and I would imagine that we have friends and allies as well as people who would just rather write about things that are fairly trivial.

I have presented at multiple conferences on the topic of how we can grow the female game and make sport and tennis speak to girls better. I used to regularly check in with an internet search. I would just google “female tennis players” and “male tennis players” and see what popped up, and the differences were absolutely stark. It is due a refresh for me to do that again, but you would see the male tennis players either in trophy shots, where they have just won something, or in fierce athletic shots, where they have just won a point.

Unfortunately, when I did that very simple piece of research, you would have pictures of female athletes where you could see a little bit too much, or the camera angle was looking up their skirt. Of course, this is just random people on the internet posting these things. It just all leads to that same narrative that, generally in society, we are not judged the same. We have a lot of work to do.

Q77 Dame Caroline Dinenage: For quite a lot of young people, it is through big international sporting fixtures and particularly things like the Olympics where they might tap into a sport that they have never really considered before, which grabs their attention. Things like the Olympics and world championships have a unique opportunity to get it right. I was just reading here that the Norwegian beach handball team were fined for wearing shorts over their bikinis at the European championships in 2021. Nick, you spoke about the sexualisation of sport. To what extent does that really have to be focused on as we had towards, for example, the Olympics next year?

Nick Pink: It is crucial, and it plays to your earlier question about what the international scene is looking like and what change is there. That is why we wanted to change the regulations at the International Hockey Federation immediately after we had moved ours; otherwise you could see the same thing happening at the Olympic Games. It is the international federations that stipulate at the Olympic Games what wear the teams should be performing in and, therefore, what regulations should be put in place.

It is twofold. There is an incumbency on us as a national body, but then there is the international piece as well. That is what happened in that handball situation. It was the International Handball Federation that ultimately led to the sanction that was put on the Norwegians. It is still there, and Jo’s points are absolutely right, but it needs to be a bit more co-ordinated.

The UK is taking a bit of a leading role in this area. Committees like this make a significant difference as well, but we have to leverage that influence internationally and, for us, that is through our international



federations. That is not just hockey, but all Olympic and Paralympic sports in that context.

Kelly Gordon: We had the Netball World Cup this year, and the day after the semi-finals was the football. The press did a really good job of promoting female role models. We have done a lot of work with the Roses on sharing their female stories. It is not just about them being an athlete—and they are amazing athletes—but also about their lives, their bodies and what they have been through, so that, going right back to the start of this, it normalises the conversation.

Again, the press have been very supportive on creating opportunities. Ellie Cardwell is really keen on making sure that girls understand about correct sports bras. They have done lots of articles with Ellie on sports bras. It is not just the role they play as athletes and making sure we have that imagery right; it also putting themselves out there as an everyday woman who goes through these things and who has their own story to tell. It is just as important to us to change that narrative. We have found that the press have been quite supportive of that this year.

Jo Ward: Are you aware of the Correct the Internet campaign?

Dame Caroline Dinenage: No. Tell us about that.

Jo Ward: Not only are our female athletes portrayed in a manner that is probably not athletic at times, but there is just general misinformation on websites. Correct the Internet is a scheme that we are supporting. If you were to google, "Who has won the most grand slam titles?" the answer it would give you is Novak Djokovic, but the answer is not Novak Djokovic. He has won 23. That does not take into consideration Serena Williams, who has also won 23, or Margaret Court, who has won 24.

There are so many instances like that, where the amazing achievements of female athletes are not even on the record for everybody to see and find out about. If things appear incorrect perhaps in the press, it might be because where they are getting their research from is also incorrect. There is just this general male bias in terms of search engines and so on. It is an interesting one to look up. I am now an avid participator in Correct the Internet. If you see things like that, there is a tool you can use to go in and help correct it. You can change the narrative.

Nick Pink: Andy Murray has talked—

Chair: I was about to say that. This is the Andy Murray narrative, isn't it?

Jo Ward: Yes, he is just so good in that space. He has been brilliant. As women, we are all trying to have the conversations ourselves and we are pushing hard on the agenda. As an NGB, we are making sure our website is 50:50 equal representation and that our representation is correct, and so on. When Andy drops the bomb in the press conference, it is just so powerful coming from him.



Q78 Dame Caroline Dinenage: I was about to finish, but you have prompted something else. To what extent are male sports figures very effective agents of change when it comes to getting those messages across?

Jo Ward: From my point of view, even before Andy did the “male player” thing in the conference, it was the fact he employed a female coach. I remember the conversations that happened at the time. I was outside the NGB at the time. I was a coach working in what I would call a traditional club. It would be non-traditional now because I feel like tennis has moved on.

When they announced that he had appointed that female coach, the conversations in the bar were enlightening. The conversation was around, “What can she teach him?” Well, she was a former world No. 1. She was a grand slam champion. In terms of her tennis credentials, she could teach him quite a lot at that time. There are still some biases in that sort of older infrastructure that we need to change. We absolutely need allies.

Nick Pink: Yes, 100%. As you were asking your two questions, I was reflecting on something. I have been in hockey now for almost four years. I came from golf and cricket previously. I have worked in sport for 20-plus years.

The interesting thing is that we do not talk about women’s hockey and men’s hockey. We talk about hockey. In golf, we talked about golf and women’s golf. In cricket, we talked about cricket and women’s cricket. If we can move that bar significantly and start talking about sport, not men’s sport and women’s sport, we will have made a significant difference. Your questions, which are really pertinent and absolutely right, highlight to me the step change we still need to make.

Where the media can help and support is elevating sport for sport’s sake and championing our heroes alongside each other, rather than men having to promote women and women having to promote women’s sport. How can we start to promote sport for sport’s sake? That would be a massive change.

Kelly Gordon: I referenced before netball and football. The Roses did a video for the Lionesses and the Lionesses did a video for the Roses. It got so much traction. It was beneficial to both sides. It is probably the first time I have seen that happen in female sport. It was so powerful. That is the stuff we need to be doing more of.

Q79 Kim Johnson: Good morning, panel. My questions this morning are going to be on coaching and school PE. We have already touched on coaching. Kelly, you mentioned that women’s physiology will be integrated into coaching in the next 12 months. Jo, I would be interested to hear from you about what the LTA is doing to ensure women’s health is incorporated into coaching.



Jo Ward: I have talked a lot about coach education because that is my field. Within the workshop I referenced earlier, “Coaching Females: Research and Practical Applications”, we talked about specific female physiology to educate coaches. This was a workshop we launched in 2017. We were highlighting ACL issues in female athletes.

We give coaches specific interventions that they can start with their grassroots female players, and hopefully those female players and their coaches will take those interventions all the way through.

The research is generally scant, I would say. In researching to write that workshop, I encountered a phenomenon whereby, certainly in the psychological and in the physiological literature, most studies defaulted to male norms because female hormones mess with the data. That is the line I kept being told. There is now some female-specific research. We set about educating coaches not only that there are, of course, observable physical differences, but also that not treating those physical differences in an educated manner will lead to injuries.

I myself have had 11 knee surgeries. I am not often in a room where I lose that battle, unfortunately. Had I played pro tennis or even junior tennis today, I would be playing with coaches who would have had more information around the specific interventions for the knee in particular.

We do a lot of work around how to—it is a little bit technical—activate the posterior chain so that it switches on and you have recruited the strength in the muscles. Once you have recruited the strength in the muscles, you can then strengthen them, and therefore you insulate your knees against the demands of whatever sport you are playing.

This also comes into the wider piece around participation. The different physicality of female athlete requires different coaching in a technical context. A little while ago, coaches were coaching girls and boys the same. If you try to imprint male technique on female bodies, not only might that lead to injury, but there is also a link—these are just my anecdotal thoughts here—to dropouts. You are asking a body to do something it will have limited success doing. We know that success breeds confidence and confidence breeds motivation. That is a classic piece of psychology.

Q80 Kim Johnson: What more needs to be done to better educate both male and female coaches in terms of some of the issues you have just raised, Jo?

Jo Ward: In this particular sphere, we have good research now. We just need to keep driving it—more coach education, more workshops, more webinars and more mentoring—in all of these areas.

Again, I am fortunate. I am the driver of that research, and I am also sat as the head of coach education. It is in qualifications. We have circa 3,500 coaches a year who undertake a qualification in tennis coaching.



They are subject to this level of education. We have 6,500 coaches who are accredited, as I mentioned. Many of those coaches do additional workshops and continuing professional development.

They are being educated on this both in a mandatory way, through their qualifications, and in an elective way outside of that. I feel like we just need to keep driving that education.

Q81 Kim Johnson: Can I ask you the same question, Nick, in terms of hockey?

Nick Pink: Yes, it is very similar. A lot of it is about the education and support in place for coaches. The bit I was interested in is the balance between the qualification point for a coach and then the ongoing CPD and support. Jo has referenced that.

One of the benefits we have seen since covid is the ability to have more independent learning and more collaborative learning through Teams and Zoom. That is enabling opportunities for coaches within our workforce to have that ongoing support, and to have these natural conversations about the themes and everything else that is starting to develop based on the research that has been referenced in the areas Jo talks about.

Yes, of course there has to be an element of this in the core component of the course, but it is then about the ongoing professional development and the opportunity for those coaches to continue to learn. It is a bit like your driving test. You learn how to pass your test, and then—I am sorry to say it—sometimes you forget what was in your test.

The ongoing piece is critical as far as we are concerned. That piece is so important. That is what we are looking to do and we are trialling it with our advanced coaches at the moment to understand what content would be appropriate.

Q82 Kim Johnson: Kelly, you touched on research earlier on. I was just interested in what conversations you are having with the likes of HE establishments about integrating and incorporating into courses these elements about sportswomen and the importance of coaching and physiology. How widely available are those courses at the moment?

Kelly Gordon: That is a great question. I do not know in terms of HE. The work we are doing is very much focused on primary and secondary. I can answer the question but at that level of education.

We are just about to do a pilot with Swansea University. One scary stat is that only 51% of schools in England have the menstrual cycle as part of their curriculum, even though it is mandatory. Swansea University did that research, and has now developed a four-week lesson plan to help teachers deliver menstrual cycle education.

Where it is being delivered, it is part of a biology lesson. It is also more likely to be in secondary school. We teach photosynthesis before we



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teach the menstrual cycle. When we do teach the menstrual cycle, it is one lesson a year. Predominantly, these girls have already gone through that process—on average, girls start their periods at 11 or 12—by the time they get to the second year of secondary school.

The work we are doing with Swansea University is around merging our resources, taking the work we have done on understanding the body and making it quite practical for the young girl. We are going to pilot it in schools. Again going back to what I was saying before, we also have a role to play in trying to change that wider system piece.

Q83 Kim Johnson: I am interested in the national sporting organisations, such as Sport England, and their level of understanding of the importance of this. Where are they up to? Is greater education needed within those organisations?

Kelly Gordon: I mentioned before that in a couple of weeks' time we will have a cross-sector group looking at puberty. That includes Youth Sport Trust; it includes Sport England; it includes a couple of other governing bodies and active partnerships; and, most importantly, it includes a teacher's voice and a young person's voice.

We are all doing different things. We all need to come together and work out how we change this. To me, this is the biggest thing we have to change. It needs to be at a younger age. We have very limited education at primary school. What should we do collectively? What do those resources look like? How can Sport England and Youth Sport Trust drive that? They have the investment; they have the infrastructure.

For me, it is very much cross-sectoral. As netball, we can only do so much. Together, we could do something quite powerful.

Jo Ward: Kelly is right. We are working hard internally to make sure the different strands of support, education and information are all tied up. My default is always coach education, but we have a partnership with Prime Video through which we are educating coaches to recruit girls, attract them into tennis and then maintain them in the sport. We are giving them education around the psychosocial elements and so on.

We have our teacher training programme, where we have trained 16,000 teachers. Bringing all these strands together is providing good participation figures: 41% of adults in tennis are female; 49% of children in tennis are female. We are proud, but we are not satisfied yet.

Where do we need to do more? Of course, we have a relationship and we work with Sport England; we work with CIMSPA and all of those bodies. For me, sat here now, more cross-sport working will strengthen the ties. We are all doing really good work in this space.

Nick Pink: If I can just add to that, without trying to take anything away, it is cross-sport working under a national strategy that is critical for this.



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You alluded to the national partners in your question. There is UK Coaching; there is also Sport England and CIMSPA, which you mentioned. It is about having a national strategy we can all work towards. Hockey benefits from that, as do netball, tennis and all the other sports or physical activities that are in it.

Where others are slightly ahead in terms of what they have implemented, that becomes the case study and the best practice that we role model and we start supporting. If there is a recommendation that comes out in this space, it would add real strength and validity to all the work we are trying to do in each of our sports at this moment in time.

Q84 Kim Johnson: You mentioned earlier on that you have a 70:30 gender split in terms of coaches. Could you say a little about how you are targeting and looking to address that, particularly at the elite level?

Nick Pink: I am glad I am sat here now and not four years ago because that number was not as good as it is today. It is growing quite significantly and changing. We are anticipating that it will be 50:50 in the next five years, if not even sooner.

Strangely, in terms of growth, we are now seeing that the demand and the potential interest is now greater from females who want to coach and get involved in the sport. If you go straight through most hockey clubs, you will pretty much see 50:50 representation in participation. What is changing now is the demand for female coaches, for all the reasons that we have discussed today.

We are absolutely doing targeted work. We are doing targeted work to increase the number of female coaches at the elite level because we absolutely see that gap. We work with UK Sport very closely around some of that too, but we have our own programme targeted towards that. We are seeing an increase in demand that is really encouraging. We will do more to promote and encourage that, but we will start to see that changing, as we have seen for the last four years.

Q85 Kim Johnson: That is very positive. I know in tennis 23% of coaches are women. Jo, what work is being undertaken to increase those numbers, particularly at the elite level of tennis?

Jo Ward: As you mentioned, women are around a quarter of all accredited coaches. It is around one third at the entry point of the pathway, at level 1. We have five levels in tennis.

We are doing two things. On the one hand, we are driving numbers. We have strategic initiatives and support. We have 12 coach development centres, which run most of our coach education. They run levels 1, 2 and 3 and the CPD. We have given them strategic funding and the autonomy within their regions to drive female coach numbers at that first level. We are really trying to grow the funnel at the base of the pyramid, and then we are going up.



We run levels 4, 5 and 6, which is our tutor qualification, in house. We have had targeted initiatives there as well, which include some grant funding and more specific elements. We have a female mentoring scheme. Again, this is very anecdotal and not scientifically backed up, but in my experience males will just put themselves forward for something, whereas females might need a tap on the shoulder. They might need some support in between qualifications or throughout qualifications, so we have a female mentoring scheme.

The other element I have talked a lot about is coaching female players better because that is the recruiting ground for the next generation of female coaches. We need to coach them better, keep them in the game longer and turn them into competitive players. That is where the funnel into coaching will complete that virtuous circle. Those two strands are really important to us.

Q86 Kim Johnson: Kelly, you just mentioned the work you do in terms of supporting PE teachers. The Government's school sport and activity action plan has recently been updated. Does it adequately cover female health issues?

Kelly Gordon: No. It was interesting to reflect on the conversation before. We forget that the young person is at the heart of this. At a young age, girls and boys play multiple sports. Netball has an element of exposure to that young person, as do hockey and tennis, but the teacher and the parent are probably the consistent points for that young person.

That is where we have to try to make the change. There is not enough done. I am not a teacher, but I am sure that why it is not being delivered is because of pressures in the curriculum. If it is mandatory in the curriculum, you would think it should be delivered.

The research that the University of Swansea did not only highlighted the lack of provision, but also asked teachers what would help them do more. One was around access to resource and training. We called it "mind the gap" when we were developing our female health education. It is one thing—Nick alluded to—to have the education, but it is another thing to have the confidence to have the conversation.

In a primary or secondary school, it is not just females having those conversations. How do we provide the resources and provide the education to enable those teachers to have those conversations? That has to be hand in hand with parents as well. We have to do that collectively.

Nick Pink: I would echo everything Kelly has said so well there. It is also about having specialists. What we have been seeing in terms of school sport provision more recently—Youth Sport Trust has been talking quite powerfully about this in the press—is having, particularly at primary school level, PE specialists in schools.



We have seen a drop-off in the number of hours children and young people are participating in sport, physical activity and, most importantly, physical education. That is where your physical literacy is developed.

As sports, what we experience and see as that young person comes into our clubs, our environments and everything else is that the physical ability of children and young people has changed and is changing. Therefore, coming back to your original question, the need for the coach to go back to those fundamentals and the general motor skills for children and young people is even greater.

It is going back to the core basics of holding, running, throwing, catching and everything else that is so important to sport and physical activity, as well as movement and balance. The crux of this and a lot of the challenge around this is about the provision in primary and secondary schools, as Kelly is rightly saying.

Q87 Kim Johnson: Jo, do educators need to do more to make girls feel comfortable talking about their menstrual health and body image, particularly when it comes to sport participation and performance?

Jo Ward: Absolutely, yes. As I have referenced—I will not go over it again—part of that comfort comes from making the recipients of that conversation feel comfortable hearing it. In many cases, that might be the coaches—female and male coaches.

It is moving in the right direction. As I have said, the work we are doing in tennis at the elite level is game-changing. If I had been a player in today's day, it would have been absolutely better in terms of that element, as well as the physical side of things. We have some work to do with coaches. It is still a taboo subject. Nick was absolutely right when he spoke earlier about having a policy under which we all align in this space.

We also have to recognise that, if we work together, the sports are more than the sum of our parts, but we also still have a larger culture at play outside of sports. Oftentimes we work in one direction and it works back against us. We can be powerful in this space. We can really reach out, speak to girls and normalise the things that absolutely need to be discussed and talked about and that girls need to feel comfortable with. I am a bit of a general optimist. I feel like we can change culture if we all get together and unite.

Q88 Lia Nici: It is absolutely fascinating to hear your expert opinions. We will just move on now to the maternity stage of life. We have all heard about Eboni Usoro-Brown's brilliant experience with netball and her return to elite netball once she had had a baby. Kelly in particular, what things should other sports be learning from netball?

Kelly Gordon: Eboni shared her story openly. She had a female coach. We have talked about the uniqueness of netball being that it is predominantly female. Straightaway, that makes it a little easier in one sense.



Eboni talked about having Anna as her coach. It is about that personal understanding. We talked about the importance of understanding your body. Eboni's prenatal and postnatal programmes were very much around her body and her training. That same understanding needs to go all the way down the pathway. It goes back to what we were saying before around understanding your body and understanding the menstrual cycle.

We need our clubs to be confident in understanding how to support women when they turn up at a club session and say to the side, "I am pregnant. What do I do?" As a governing body, we now have the resources to provide to that club to say, "These are the sorts of things this lady should be doing up to a certain stage in the pregnancy and then, when they come back, this is how to support them coming back".

As a governing body, it is our role to provide those coaches with that information. Again, they are not medical experts. They are not doctors, and we are not asking them to be, but we can provide the information to them.

We need to learn from the top. Eboni's story is amazing. We need to roll that down through the pathway. It is not easy. Everyone has their own personal story and their own personal experience. It needs to be led by the player, the athlete.

Q89 Lia Nici: Do those conversations start in the sport before? There is a time when women and men are thinking about wanting to have families and babies and planning that in.

Kelly Gordon: Again, it is around understanding the menstrual cycle as well. You need to have that understanding of your body. You need to have that understanding of, "Am I on the pill? Do I come off the pill? What impacts will that have on my body in terms of getting ready to get pregnant?" The coach needs to have that education too. They need to have that conversation with the player, be that at elite level or grassroots level.

As I said, through the resource we have developed through NETBALLHer, we now have the resources to empower the coach and the player to have those conversations. It is really important, but that does not take away from the fact that those conversations are difficult to have. Everybody has their own lived experience when it comes to having those conversations. It is slightly easier for us because we have a predominantly female workforce, as I say.

Q90 Lia Nici: Does UK Sport's pregnancy and maternity guidance, through which they provide all of their advice to funded sports bodies, provide all of the advice that you need? If not, how does it need to be improved?

Nick Pink: That is a good question. It is certainly something we are following at the moment. We have a player on our programme who has just had a child. We have gone through that process. I would be



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interested in her response to this specifically. She is still a few weeks in so we have not bothered her too much about policy and maternity things at this moment in time, just purely because she is going through that. Having been through that most recently, we would be very interested in her feedback.

It does provide advice, from what we have seen. We have been following and working through that process. They are pretty good at making sure they are engaging with us through it as well to understand the potential challenges or changes that need to go on in relation to that policy.

There is another thing we have learned from quite significantly, which I touched on earlier. Several years ago, one of our coaches recognised that the coach may not be the right person to have this conversation with. The player or athlete may not feel most comfortable doing it in that environment, even if you put in place the right structure, boundaries and everything else.

We have performance lifestyle coaches in place. Yes, that covers a little bit of what happens after you are an elite athlete, but it is also about what you are going through at this moment in time. The athletes have access to various types of counselling, support and other things that are available. That is one of the benefits, as I mentioned earlier on, of the UK Sports Institute because the performance lifestyle coaches are employed by them.

There is an arm's-length connection there. They are very much part of the team at England Hockey and Great Britain Hockey, but there is a safe space for the athlete to share what they are going through and to get expert support and advice where they need to. That covers some of the points we have been making. Although it is different to coaching, it covers across sport and other things too. UK Sport invests in the UK Sports Institute around that.

There will be some learnings, and we will take some of that out of Jo's experience most recently, but there is certainly some stuff we can learn from there.

Q91 Lia Nici: How does pregnancy and maternity decision making by sportswomen work from a team perspective? What happens within the team dynamic?

Kelly Gordon: From a netball perspective, we have had a few examples. They just work with it. That is the thing. The coach has the conversation with the player. When they say they are pregnant, they go to a point where they can continue to play. When they return, they return. Their place is there for them and the girls play as they have.

It has not been and it is not a problem within our sport. Eboni's story is amazing and she shares it very eloquently. She has felt supported all the way through that journey. Although Eboni was at Bath, that does not



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mean it is consistent across all of the clubs. On the whole we are supportive of the player. The players themselves would say that. What we need to do is get the consistency across the pathway and, as I say, have that conversation at the grassroots level.

The other thing to mention is the return. It is one thing to have the conversation to start with, to tell the coach they are pregnant and then to stop playing at the right time for their body, but returning to play is really important. We have a programme called Jump High Land Strong, which was developed for the Roses but we have embedded it across the pathway. That is all about getting your body ready to return to play, be that post pregnancy or post injury. We have to look at the whole spectrum of pregnancy, not just when they are ready to go off and welcoming them back.

Q92 Lia Nici: Jo, you are from an individual and non-team sport. What kind of support do sports clubs need, particularly tennis clubs, in order to be able to have those conversations with women about having children and returning to sport afterwards?

Jo Ward: I am not sure whether you are aware, but this week is the US Open. There are 10 mothers in the draw. I have not known that number ever. Partly what we need are role models, which we are now starting to get. They are very visible in tennis, with tennis being a very visible sport in terms of TV and so on.

We said about the return. The Women's Tennis Association approach is that it protects female players' rankings when they are pregnant. Back in my day, we would protect our rankings if we got injured. Pregnancy is now included in that. We have the trailblazers who are paving the way for the education to trickle down.

We too use the UK Sport policy with our elite athletes while we are developing our own. In terms of your question around how we would cascade that down to clubs, the infrastructure of tennis is slightly different, in so far as clubs are individual places that you join with individual membership. You probably do not have that kind of relationship of club. There is team sport, but it is not the same as an actual team competition in a team sport like this.

We need to ensure that whatever information comes from UK Sport policy or our own policy is available to female players if they need it. I will go back and check where we are with that.

Kelly Gordon: Can I just add a point? We have talked a lot about the players in our sports. As governing bodies, the three of us are quite large governing bodies. We have a responsibility to our own staff and employees as well. A lot of the work we are doing is looking at our own female health policy. Do we have the right maternity policy in place? That is not just the basic statutory policy. How do we return people to work post pregnancy?



We have within our own workforce, I found out yesterday, a few people off with ACL injuries due to playing netball as their sport. Again, what should we be doing to support our own staff? I always say we cannot expect our staff and our coaches to have the conversations and support others without us supporting them. With all of the conversations we have had today, it is just as important for us to look at ourselves.

- Q93 **Lia Nici:** As an older woman myself, when I was younger there were never those conversations. When you do discover you are pregnant, nobody has those conversations with you, if you play amateur sport or higher-level sport, about whether it is safe or not. Those conversations are not generally happening out there, are they?

Kelly Gordon: Yes. There is a knock-on effect on mental health there as well. For a lot of women, sport is their outlet. Knowing when they can carry on playing and, most importantly, when they can come back and have that mental health release is really important.

- Q94 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** I am going to ask some questions about women in leadership roles. To what extent does better recognition of the health needs of female athletes depend on there being female representation at the higher levels of sports governance? That is to all of you, but I will start with Jo.

Jo Ward: Representation is important, of course, because we also want there to be opportunity for women climbing the ladder within sports governance, but education is the other part of that. Males can also provide really stimulating conversations, insight and interventions in this area, if they also have the education.

It is really interesting for me in my role because I feel like my job is to cascade the information down through our coaching workforce, which is my primary stakeholder group, but, on this issue and on some of the things I have talked to you about, I have also presented up to the exec on these. It is really important that the education goes both ways.

I feel relatively lucky that I am in a sport where our executive team is 40% female. I feel confident that we do have strong female representation as well as the education piece I have mentioned within those decision-making roles. That strong governance cascades all the way down. It is generally a very important element.

One thing we do as a sport that I am particularly proud of is we publish an annual diversity and inclusion report where we track our progress against national statistics in terms of representation across the exec, the board, in counties, coaches, volunteers and so on. That might be female representation, the representation of disabled people or ethnic diversity. We look across all of those measures because we want to make sure that every conversation that might lead to a strategic intervention or an opportunity to change someone's life through tennis has got everybody's opinions, insights and lived experiences in the mix.



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Q95 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Just while we are on that point, are there any targets for representation?

Jo Ward: As the national governing body, we want to reflect the larger population. Our targets are basically driven by that.

Q96 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Kelly, how would you say representation affects the health needs of women being met in sports?

Kelly Gordon: Similar to Jo—I would completely echo what she said—from a leadership level we have a mixed female and male board and a mixed exec.

As you can imagine given what you have heard from me today, we have been having a lot of conversations recently, over the last year, around all sorts of things that probably those men would never have thought they were going to talk about in a boardroom, like periods and all sorts of things. It has been really welcomed. They have really welcomed the conversation. They have been very open: “That is new to us”; “I have a teenage daughter. I had not even thought about that”; “My wife is going through the menopause. This is really useful”. It is really important to have open conversations at that level with men and females in the same environment. We have lived that over the last 12 months.

The other thing to consider is how you define leadership. For us as a sport, we have regions and counties. For me, it is about making sure we have consistency across every level of leadership as well in terms of those same types of conversations. It is about that diversity of thinking, is it not? You need to have the right people in the room having the right conversations.

Absolutely, this is a female sport—we are predominantly female-representative anyway—but it is really important to have those lived experiences in the room and to have conversations with men.

Q97 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Is the board purposefully split 50:50?

Kelly Gordon: It is mixed in terms of ethnicity as well as gender.

Q98 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Do you have a set target for that or does it just happen to be so?

Kelly Gordon: Our recruitment is done in a way that means we do have an ethnic mix. As boards, we are all targeted to have an ethnic and gender mix.

Nick Pink: It is similar for us. We have a target for the board to be 50:50 representative. We are on the way towards that; we are 40:60. I was just trying to remember what the number was because we have just recruited some new board members. At senior manager level, we are almost 50:50. It is five of 12, whatever that percentage is; I was trying to work that one out whilst you were talking to me, working that through. We are working towards that too.



That is incredibly important. It benefits player health and confidence to know there is representation at the senior level in all of our organisations. As Kelly mentions, it changes the dynamic in the board and it changes the level of discussion. It is also about the individuals. It is what they bring to those tables. The skillset, as well as the representation, is also really important. People need to feel they can contribute to the different discussions we have at board level.

The other thing Kelly has just touched on, which is really important, is governance in sports more widely. We are all rightfully tasked with making significant changes to the code for sports governance at the moment. That is monitored by UK Sport and Sport England. In terms of sport governance, my experience in sport over the last 20-plus years is that some sports are really good at that and others are not very good at that.

What has impressed me about the sport of hockey—I am sorry to focus on that for a second—is that, when I moved into the role, there was an appetite to change its governance and to make a change in terms of almost simplifying the structure to enable those who participate in the sport to have an easier experience. We had different regulations for boys, girls, women's and men's hockey. We had all sorts of league, district and county structures. It was mind-boggling. It is an amateur sport that has developed over a period of 100 to 150 years, going back to one of the earlier questions.

We have stripped all that away. Now we have eight areas that are aligned to our policies and our procedures. It is really interesting to go through that. We now have new directors. There is much more gender balance across the directors in the eight areas than we have seen before. There is much more ethnic and cultural balance than we have seen before.

It is the classic top-down, bottom-up approach we have been talking about today. The impact of having younger people on those committees and boards is pretty significant. They are much more tuned into the discussion we have been having today. They are much more tuned into that from their own corporate and work experience. There are all sorts of lived experiences coming into that that we are benefiting from, from a sport perspective. That does have a positive knock-on effect on health, the sport and the way we are operating, to your question.

Q99 Bell Ribeiro-Addy: We all heard about the World Cup victory of the Spanish women's football team and how it has been overshadowed by the actions of the male president of the Spanish football federation. Just prior to that, the performance of the Spanish team was overshadowed by a dispute between the players and the Spanish football federation, which meant that 15 players withdrew from selection last year. Does the treatment of those players demonstrate at the importance of female representation at the highest levels of administration?



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Jo Ward: I would go back to my previous point. There are two strands to this. It strikes me that representation and education go hand in hand. That is why we work so hard to ensure that our predominantly male workforce—we are 75% male—has all of the education they need to ensure female players in our sport can both survive and thrive. That is an expression I use a lot. That means that they can feel safe, comfortable and continue participating.

Of course, there will be wider cultural issues and lots of other things at play, but, generally speaking, I feel like the message loud and clear from our three sports has been that we are driving representation and education and we can impact wider culture from the work we do within sports.

Kelly Gordon: I was just literally just about to say the word “culture”. It is about what your sport stands for. We have done a lot of work on what we mean by having an unapologetic focus on females and what that means for us as a sport. If you have that culture embedded within your sport, you would hope that the things you have just quoted do not happen. For me, it is a case of getting to the bottom of what is going on with the culture within that sport in order to be able to address the issue.

Nick Pink: You ask a really good question. I was thinking about it in the context of what would have happened if it were the FA, England Hockey, Great Britain Hockey or any one of our national governing bodies. First, I would hope that would not happen to the level you have just described, but, secondly, if it did, the authorities, including the Government, would come down much quicker.

This goes back to a question Caroline was asking earlier around where different international places are. I am not making a point about Spain here. It is definitely not a Spanish point. It is about the cultural piece. It is probably about the journey we have been on in sport, the changes we are starting to see and therefore the representation.

I took over from Sally Munday, who is now chief executive of UK Sport. I was very conscious about that, first, because she is a fantastic person and it is always hard taking over from someone like that, but also because she is a really prominent figure as a female leader within sport. I did not want people to think, “Now there is a male leader in that role; is the sport suddenly changing?”

It is important to ask those questions, and it is important to go through that process. It definitely helped me in the role I have been doing, along with getting the right level of mentoring and support from others who have been through the same experience or, in that context, speaking to Sally and others about what that means. That has come from my education and learning about what we have all been through as a culture and a society—that shift and change.



It is about recognising when things just are not right. When they are wrong, you need to make a decision about them. That comes down to good leadership. It is about good management. I am certainly not there by any stretch. You are not ever there in terms of the full picture, but it is about having people around you who can support you in the right way. In that case, that sadly just did not happen.

- Q100 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Kelly, I want to ask a question about netball in the Olympics being a female-dominated sport. Netball being an Olympic sport would attract more investment, funding, exposure and different things for the players. The Olympic charter says that, in order to be accepted, a sport has to be practised by at least 75 countries on four continents by men. For women, it has to be practised by no fewer than 40 countries and on three continents. At the moment, netball is practised in 80 countries, but one of the reasons used for it not being one of the Olympic sports is that it is not widely played in Russia or China.

I wonder whether you thought that having better representation at the higher bodies that make these decisions would make it more likely for netball to become an Olympic sport, given that there are some sports that do not meet this criteria that seem to make it every time we have the Olympics.

Kelly Gordon: It baffles me every time you see these new sports coming in. Your stats are right, though. That is the reason why we are not in. There is a continuous campaign that goes on to get netball into the Olympics. England Netball and the other leading nations work very closely with World Netball to try to get the breadth across countries so we can reach more nations.

We can carry on doing the lobbying and the campaigning, but it is almost outwith our control, in that sense. We put a lot of emphasis on the World Championships and the Commonwealth Games, whatever the future holds for the Commonwealth Games. They are our pinnacle events. We continuously want to drive that change. There is campaigning going on all the time but, until we change the number of countries that play the game, it will continue not to be in the Olympics.

- Q101 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** As you said about the new sports, my concern is that there are fewer countries playing the sports that are coming in, whereas netball has more countries. Does that mean there is a complete difference in terms of the amount of resources you receive? Is this linked to the representation in the different bodies that make the decisions?

Kelly Gordon: Possibly, yes. The other countries that are not playing netball may have an emphasis on other sports. I do not know, to be honest. I do not know the reason for it. As a governing body, we can work with those other bigger nations to help drive that change.

Again, going back to what we have been saying all along, as a collective of netball nations we are going to be stronger and more likely to make the change than we are if we were trying to do it individually. That is



what we do, and we do it through World Netball. I do not know the answer to why other nations are not selecting netball.

Q102 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Finally, to all of you, have there been any other instances in your respective sports that have highlighted the need for greater female representation in leadership positions? Is there anything else you wanted to flag with us, other than everything you have already flagged?

Nick Pink: The bit I constantly challenge myself and the organisation around is what the other opportunities are that we should be looking at and looking for. We are about to go through a process of change of chair and president in the next 12 months. There is a significant opportunity there.

The 2016 cohort of players were immensely successful in Rio. They are already very professionalised in terms of their own careers and other things, but we need to elevate those opportunities, which helps the sport and, more importantly, helps sport plc in the broader context. It is about challenging yourself in those spaces and environments.

We also need to think about our own recruitment practices and the other things Kelly was just talking about. We are seeing a 50:50 balance in the organisation in terms of the split, which is encouraging, but there is still more we can do, particularly in those leadership spaces and leadership roles, to your earlier question. We should not stop and think we have done the job by any stretch. We need to be continually thinking about ways in which we can do that. The ethnic and cultural diversity of that is really important too.

Jo Ward: I just want to comment on what we can do better because I feel like that is a really important thing for us to take away in terms of what we can go back and do.

In terms of your question about that specifically, we are very lucky to have a female president. We have a strong showing on exec; we have lots of women in my position and in leadership roles. My reflection is that we need to do better with more female head coaches. Bearing in mind that ours is a self-employed sport, we need to have more female representation at a local level to cascade the message and the lived experience throughout our clubs and venues.

Q103 **Lia Nici:** What are your sports doing to support perimenopausal and menopausal women and to encourage more participation? Do you have targets for that?

Kelly Gordon: As part of NETBALLHer, we have a load of resource around menopause and how to support perimenopause and menopause. That is based on the stat that 30% of women who hit perimenopause stop being active. As a sport, we need to address that. As a collective, we need to address that. The message we give through our resources is that



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staying active through your menopause and perimenopause is a positive thing.

We have resources for the players and we also have resources for the coaches. Again, it goes back to the resources that enable that conversation. The feedback we have had is that for younger players it is a really difficult conversation to have. They do not really know about it; they do not really know how to have those conversations.

Again, going back to lived experience, it is sometimes easier for an older coach to have a conversation with the group of women—the “back to” netballers or walking netballers. They just want the tools to be able to have the conversation.

For us, there are two sides. First, we need to provide the coach with the education; secondly, we need to provide the players with the resources. As I said before, it is then about looking at ourselves and making sure we have menopause policies in place to support our workforce.

Jo Ward: We also have targeted coaching products aimed specifically at females, which are very good for older females as well. This is in the tennis space.

I feel like I should end my evidence here by talking about padel. We are now the national governing body for padel. I am an addict. Padel is played on a smaller course. I do not know whether any of you have seen it or played it, but we are inside a glass box. It has been called squash in the sun in Spain. It is always doubles. There are social aspects and it is physically easier.

From my experience so far in padel, I am seeing a lot of older and maybe non-traditional tennis players picking up the sport of padel. It is early days for us in terms of stats and data, but it is going to make big inroads in this space.

Nick Pink: Very quickly, the very short answer is probably that we are not doing enough. Yes, we are engaging with the national agencies around menopause and perimenopause. Sport England has been on the front foot with guidance and support and we have general guidance for the sport, but there is far more we can do, particularly internally to our own team members, as Kelly was saying. There is also more we can do to support that in terms of coach education and the general participation in the sport.

We are seeing significant increases in the level of players who want to continue to play beyond the usual drop-off of late 30s or early 40s. We are seeing a huge increase, and that is pretty consistent across most sports now. There is far more we need to do to make sure we understand the impact of those changes and how we can support them.

Chair: Thank you to all of our witnesses for your evidence today. If there



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is anything about which you wish to follow up in writing, we would be very pleased to receive it. That finishes the meeting for the day.