HOUSE OF COMMONS

Culture, Media and Sport Committee

Oral evidence: Women's sport, HC 1205

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Watch the meeting

Members present: Dame Caroline Dinenage (Chair); Kevin Brennan; Julie Elliott; Damian Green; Dr Rupa Huq; Jane Stevenson; Giles Watling.

Questions 67 - 90

Witnesses

I: Dr Beth Clarkson, Visiting Lecturer, University of Portsmouth; Dr Rafaelle Nicholson, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Media & Communication, Bournemouth University; Professor Hanya Pielichaty, Professor of Sport, Gender and Inclusive Education, University of Lincoln; Professor Stacey Pope, Associate Professor, Department of Sport and Exercise Science, Durham University.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dr Beth Clarkson, Dr Rafaelle Nicholson, Professor Hanya Pielichaty and Professor Stacey Pope.

Q67 **Chair:** Welcome to the meeting of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee for our second evidence session on women's sport. Our panel this morning focuses on academic research. We are joined by Dr Beth Clarkson, who is the visiting lecturer at Portsmouth university, Dr Rafaelle Nicholson, senior lecturer at Bournemouth university, Professor Hanya Pielichaty, professor of sport, gender and inclusive education at Lincoln university, and Professor Stacey Pope, the associate professor at the department of sport and exercise science at Durham University. You are all very welcome. Thank you so much for joining us.

Yesterday we finally saw the resignation of Luis Rubiales, three weeks after his wholly inappropriate behaviour that threatened to overshadow Spain's victory at the World cup. Rather than focusing on the success of the Spanish side and, closer to home, that incredible performance of the Lionesses, the media discussion has been dominated by the behaviour of men. Later on in the session we are going to be talking in more detail about sexism and misogyny in sport, but I want to start by asking the panel: to what extent do you think that tone-deaf response, including the continued lack of any form of apology, may have on women and girls thinking of taking up sport?

Professor Pielichaty: Thank you so much for having me. It is a privilege to be here. I think something that happens so globally in front of people across the world, and something that is in a moment of emotion and passed off in that sense, can be damaging to the reputation of girls and women. What we need to do is to think holistically about this and look at the positives for England, for the UK, and for girls' and women's sport in general. However, we have to be mindful that with the structures, the privileged positions that people are in, people operate in different ways, in ways that do not abide by a shared ethical and moral way in which to operate. This comes from decades and centuries of living in a male-dominated space that is masculinised as well, and football is a detriment to that.

I cannot speak on behalf of the delay in a reaction or response. All I can do—in solidarity with the women in Spain, and those who did not play and chose to not play in that World cup—is just to say we hear you and we understand you, we give you that voice, but not to mask the broader success of the Lionesses and women's football more broadly. That area of professionalism and acting in a professional manner, even when the experiences are challenging or your emotions are heightened, showcases the need for professionalism at all times and in all situations, not just to showcase a potential veneer towards professional environments for women and girls all over.

Chair: Thank you. Does anyone have anything to add to that?

Dr Clarkson: Yes, I will add if that is okay. I think it is also very similar to some of the things that we saw during Covid in the pandemic, where women's sport—and just to speak on women's football where we conducted some research—was not prioritised at all. In that instance, it speaks to some of the ethical and social responsibilities that governing bodies have towards women's football and decisions.

If the Committee and people in the room remember, decisions about the women's game were delayed and delayed and delayed. The men's game was prioritised for reasons that were very valid at the time, and that speaks to society of the place that football has as our national game, that it does have and has had traditionally in a very male-dominated space. The women's game was certainly put on the back burner, and some of the recommendations that we have had from there in terms of how we manage major crises I think is playing out again as we are seeing the Spanish game in the news. How do you respond to that and how long does that take? It is not just in Spain; it is also at a global level in FIFA and international governing bodies. How long it takes to respond to that is probably quite a crucial point, and it is something we are still seeing happening and is something that I think is probably quite important.

Q68 **Chair:** To what extent has the success of the Lionesses in elite women's football over the last few years—despite the fact we all know it has taken many years to get this far—affected sport across the country? Stacey, did you want to start?

Professor Pope: Yes, I can speak to that. I think there are fantastic positives that we can take from that. We have also seen the major interest that fans have had in the sport for that tournament—the European championships, and indeed recently runners up at the World cup, obviously—so there are lots and lots of positives.

We have also had the legacy that hopefully will be set with the fantastic initiative from the Government to allow equal access to the sport at schools as well, and for me that could be groundbreaking. That is speaking to my research, which looks at women's experiences in accessing football over the decades.

It is astounding, really, when you consider people talking about their experiences of physical education in the 1950s to very recent times. They are coming up with the same issues: barriers, sexist teachers, girls being channelled towards netball and hockey, boys going towards football and rugby. I find it incredible that that can happen in such recent times in a way that, surely, with the national curriculum you do not have in other subject areas. We have overcome that in terms of going towards textiles if you are female and towards woodwork if you are male, so that is a brilliant initiative.

I would say that in terms of moving that forwards that will have to be enforced in some way. In a lot of the media interviews I was doing around the World cup, viewers and listeners were calling in and still

suggesting that there are difficulties for young girls at school, in the community, at a basic level in being able to access football. In some of the local interviews I did, people said, "My young girl wants to play. The school just won't offer this. She's six years old. She's going to be put off," and that boys being given more opportunities. Maybe the girls do not get to play competitive matches. Therefore, moving forward, we have to make sure that what is a fantastic initiative is actually implemented.

I know you want to speak to sexism and misogyny later on, but my point would be that, given the scale of sexism from the first example you just gave with the Spanish case, given how entrenched that is, you cannot just assume that people are going to enact that through good will. There has to be a way to make sure that that actually happens. That then has the benefits of health and wellbeing for young girls, costing the NHS less money, and costing the state less money. We know that education attainment also has positives in terms of physical activity, not to mention the teamwork and these kinds of attributes as well. I think it is amazing, but there is a lot more work that we need to do.

Q69 **Chair:** Thank you. Women's football has often been described as having a start-up model, but what innovations do you see are needed over the next five to 10 years to move it on to the next level?

Dr Nicholson: I think that what I have to say is quite radical, so I will be very interested to know what the Committee makes of it.

My view is that women's football very much needs to move towards having its own structures and to break away from where we are with men's football. The FA in its evidence to the Committee said that women's football needs its own structures that capture the soul of women's football and to develop the game with a focus on women's football, not replicating men's football. I think that is very important.

My own research has looked at the transition that took place in the 1990s away from separate governance for women's sport, whereby it was run by its own national governing bodies. Then, basically, these women's organisations were forced into mergers, with threats of withdrawal of funding from the sports councils if they did not do so. There is this forced process that takes place and I think that we are still seeing the legacies of that, unfortunately.

With the situation you described earlier with the Spanish FA, a lot of this is about men being in charge and running women's football. I do not think that is empowering for women. I think that it puts women in the situation whereby they have had to trade off. They have made a trade-off, essentially. They have more finance now. They are able to be professionals, but they do not have a voice in the governance of their own game.

The Spanish situation was an example of that, whereby women try to speak out and say, "This isn't right," but it takes a long time for anything

to happen and for those voices to be heard. I think, unfortunately, that is happening in this country as well, whereby we see, for example, with the recent Carney review, women feeling that they are second-class citizens within football. I would say that we need to think seriously about governance structures and about the way in which we can develop women's football away from men's football.

Q70 **Damian Green:** That is a very interesting point. Can I pick up on that? One of the questions clearly is: how can we as a country create a sustainable elite-level club system to build on the Lionesses' success? One of the fears I have is an analogy with men's rugby where, because of the popularity of the international game, we had this very expensive club structure, which has creaked badly, to be polite—three teams going broke. If you separated out women's football entirely and took it away from the men's clubs, would you lose a massive amount of financial support and put the women's game at risk?

Dr Nicholson: I think the situation that we have at the moment is that women's football would be able to financially stand on its own two feet. I think it is undervalued sometimes by broadcasters when it has previously been bundled in with the men's game. I know that revenues for broadcasts is something that the Committee was interested in. Sometimes the money that is being allocated currently to women's football is not getting to women's football.

This was reflected in the Carney review because there is a situation whereby Football Foundation grants are being given to clubs and then not properly audited. It has been given to clubs on condition that some of that money goes to supporting women's football and the money is not reaching them.

From the research that I have seen, there are many people working within women's football and within other women's sports who would relish the opportunity to have a real voice and who do not feel that the trade-off has been one—I say that it was a trade-off because there has been more finance flowing into women's sport now, but there are many people who are dissatisfied and feel that was disempowering. We need to think about how we empower people within women's sport to run it, who care about it and who will prioritise it.

Q71 **Damian Green:** Is there any evidence about revenues, because that is clearly interesting? Broadcasters will be cold eyed about this. If people want to subscribe to a channel so they can watch women's football, there is a potential gold mine there. Is there any evidence about that one way or the other yet?

Dr Clarkson: Can I come in there, if that is okay?

Damian Green: Yes, sure, anyone.

Dr Clarkson: We have recently done some research on the financial sustainability of women's football, and I would just like to acknowledge

Dr Nicholson. I am saying that very purposely because Raf and I have had discussions before this, and I am very respectful of Raf's work. First of all, we need to be able to learn from other sports. Being able to learn from what has worked well in cricket, in netball or in rugby is very useful. What has worked in other women's sport is useful—what has worked well and has not worked well.

You picked up on rugby there, and I think that is fantastic because men's rugby and men's cricket are a better comparison for women's football from a market perspective than men's football. We should probably limit comparisons to men's football when we think about it in a business model sense. We are 50 years behind. Sometimes that is a good thing. We get hindsight. That is one good benefit perhaps. Just to touch on that, there is a lot there and I am sure we will probably come on to the point around empowering others and women and people who are interested in the women's game. It is a very worthy point that I hope we come back to in this Committee.

To answer the revenue point that you have started there, what we have seen—and what we analysed from the inception of the WSL in 2011 through to 2019, pre-Covid—is that there have been considerable and consistent increases in revenue, so that is the good news. That has increased 590%—fantastic. The bad news is that we have gone from, on average, making small profits of around £4,000 a year to sizeable losses on average—£1,401,656 to be precise. That decline started in 2014 when it became an open league. And before I go further than that, I do not believe we should be a closed league.

There is a debt increase that has been growing quite rapidly, and that gap is increasing year on year. When you say the percentages, it sounds quite stark, but the numbers themselves in comparison to men's football are quite small so it is not very noticeable. That is why I do not think we should necessarily be comparing with the men's game. We should be comparing, as you have rightly identified there, rugby, cricket, and so on, and other women's sports as well. That is probably a better comparison.

Specifically, though—and then I will stop talking—to highlight your point around revenues, a big problem that we did have when we were trying to complete this piece of research is that it is difficult to provide comparative detail. This is something that is broader than football researchers, and it speaks to a problem that we have in the UK. It is something that is within your sphere to maybe help us on. We write research thinking, "We will make these recommendations," and you never think you will get a chance to be able to say it in front of people who can do something about it.

A problem that we have is that not all clubs provide a breakdown of where they get their revenues from. Even those that do—some do it—the bigger, more established clubs do it better than perhaps others. They do it in different formats, different categories. We can see some clear trends,

but the lack of transparent reporting in accounts is our biggest problem in being able to accurately assess this. I can give you as clear a picture as we can get it, but it is a little bit foggy.

Q72 **Damian Green:** That is very interesting, but it sounds from what you say as though it is quite likely that in the end a lot of the big male clubs—if you want to describe them as that—use their women's teams as loss leaders. They know they have to do it, but they are not making much money out of it. Would that be fair?

Dr Clarkson: I would disagree with you for a few reasons. I would not say that you are not correct there in that. I would say we have a spectrum of different things. We had a situation—rewind to 2010—that the FA wanted a strategic umbrella where the women's sections were integrated within men's professional clubs. What that has done is created a spectrum where now we have investment-focused, commercially aware clubs who understand the power and the potential. They are running at significant losses, but they can absorb them. Then, on the other end of the spectrum, we perhaps have a focus on good will.

You have just said they are loss leaders, but it is something they should do. It is good for the community. It is good PR perhaps, and we have this real spectrum, so I would not like to say that everyone is here or everyone is there. We have a real spectrum. However, perhaps when we are talking about governance—and Raf's point I want to come back to and agree with—at the moment we have a governance structure where we cannot enforce the access to the existing business functions that were intended by the FA. The FA does not govern those men's professional football clubs, so they cannot enforce the access that each club provides to the women's sections.

Dr Nicholson: Often it is very poor. We see—again, coming back to the Carney review but also in my own research in talking to people in football, cricket and other sports—that women's teams face difficult trying to get access to facilities, and they do not have recourse at the moment. It was interesting that in a previous evidence session to the Committee, Baroness Grey-Thompson said that however far women's sports come, it still feels slightly tenuous and fragile. I think that fragility is something that we need the Government to be tackling. That lack of access to important resources is part of that fragility.

One of my strong recommendations would be that the Government invest in women-owned women's sport facilities—women's sports stadia—that they can then have access to, that belong to them. I do not believe that there are any football grounds or big football stadia in the country that belong to women at the moment. Yes, they get to use them occasionally when the men let them, but that is the problem that we have at the moment.

Q73 **Damian Green:** Expanding it out from football a bit, what is the hierarchy of success, as it were? We are talking about all the problems,

but actually women's football has been a huge success. Let's have that as a background. Similarly, women's cricket and women's rugby are much more prominent and better and much more part of our national conversation than you would have imagined 10 years ago. What cross-sport lessons should we be learning from all that?

Dr Nicholson: I would say it depends on how you judge success. In terms of audiences and media coverage, yes, women's football is very successful, but there are other sports that are much more gender balanced. Something like hockey, for example, is much more gender balanced and that is reflected in the governance. You do see much more balance in the make-up of committees of boards within hockey, whereas in cricket and within football we still have huge problems with male dominance in leadership That is because of the historical legacies.

For example, in cricket—which is the sport that I have done a lot of work on—for years women trying to play cricket have had a real fight on their hands because it has been thought of as not a feminine-appropriate sport. That is even more the case with football and with rugby as well, whereas with something like hockey there is much more of a societal acceptance historically of women playing hockey.

Professor Pope: I think the point you make about the coverage is spot on. We have been in research at Durham University, which I have been leading with colleagues at Mississippi State University, including Dr Rachel Allison. We have tracked it since 2015. It is difficult to believe that if we had been having this conversation back just before that tournament, no one would have even known if we—the England women's team—were in a semi-final or a final. It was not there. It was not in the newspapers.

On the back of the London 2012 Olympics and the changes that were happening in British society around that time, that was the first time, in 2015, that we identified that we actually got that level of coverage. We tracked it for 2019 where it massively increased. It was not just an increase in coverage but quality of coverage as well, with the move away from the sexualisation of players, using terms—not all the time but tabloids and broadsheets moving more towards using the name "Lionesses" rather than "girls" or "ladies".

We are currently working on the 2023 coverage, which I can tell you from what I am seeing in the piles of newspapers—and you will have all observed yourselves—that has massively increased, so I think that is a positive that we have to celebrate. What we do need to be careful of is these assumptions that no one is interested in women's sport. As soon as a tournament has finished, in the interviews that I have done with women fans and men fans of women's football, there is frustration around it dropping off a cliff edge. It is almost business as usual resumes. It is for that period of time when we have a major World cup competition and then it is like, "Well, we're back to the premier league now".

How can you possibly build the fan base and grow the domestic women's game—whether we are talking women's football, rugby, hockey, whatever the sport—if it is not there as a serious sport? I would make that point, yes, we are in a new age of more gender equality but at the same time again we need to build and find ways to address that.

Professor Pielichaty: It is also about moving beyond the rhetoric of women feeling grateful for an opportunity, grateful to have a professional career, grateful so that we will put up with standards that we would not expect. I think that comes from years of taking on subordinated positions.

If I may just give you an example from my own playing experience, I was playing in a five-a-side football tournament. It was supposed to be mixed. I think I was the only woman in the tournament. We were about to play five men. They did not have a woman, and they looked across and asked whether they would play with four men and drop a player because I was in the opposition team.

I share that with you because of two things. First, it gives you an insight into an assumption or a perceived unevidenced idea that women are not as good at something based on gender alone; secondly, that that person thought it was considerate to ask whether they should play with four. It is that notion of being considerate—this implicit assumption that it is something for other people and not for them. It is this consideration I think that underlies a lot of these policies and a lot of these things. It is, "How can we be considerate of those, of others?" We need to be mindful that, yes, there has been so much success in women's football that we are seeing it now, and I must say my recommendation is around having live sporting events for everyone to enjoy, because that is how you get everyone involved and into it.

However, we cannot throw money at this problem. You can coat it in gold all you like, but if the foundations are rotten inside, if there is no mesh between society and tackling wider societal discrimination and misogyny more broadly, women's football will not change anything. If you just see the medals hanging around the necks, you are not going to see the misogynistic tweets the players are receiving—direct messages saying, "Get back to the kitchen" or whatever it may be—because underlying is this tumultuous problem that we are facing.

This is about moving beyond being grateful and "accessing opportunity"—we need to move beyond using those words. That is the bare minimum, isn't it? I should be able to turn up and play football—absolute bare minimum. This is about social justice. This inquiry is more than women's sport or sport for women, because we are separating it by calling it women's sport. This is about social justice for all, so we have an important job here to make those recommendations. It is about using the successes but not resting on our laurels. It is about giving people governance and allyship, using everyone as advocates and allies, not just

branding those terms but having a formalised network of allies and advocates for sport to bring and platform that voice.

Some of this stuff is hard work. Some of this stuff is centuries in the making. The problem is you cannot just put money there or a new policy there. It is not going to change the underlying sociological issues with this society. It comes back to working with equality, with health, with transport, letting people feel safe that they can play sport. It is about a joined-up approach, but the conversation starts here. It is about, yes, success but moving on from that as well in a way that joins the dots with other areas of governance.

Q74 **Chair:** Thank you. Are there any countries around the world where you feel this is being done better?

Professor Pope: Define "this". What do you mean by "this"?

Chair: At the weekend I was speaking to someone who told me that in the US, for example, women's sport is just one of the biggest growing marketplaces. There is a huge economic interest now in the growth of women's sport. Does that have any downsides to it? Is that universally a positive sense of direction? Are they doing something better? Is there anywhere else in the world that has a model to which we should aspire?

Professor Pope: Thinking about the research that I have been leading with Dr Allison, we looked at England fans and US fans and there is quite a lot of overlaps, to be fair, in terms of a commitment to gender equality. We did 102 interviews with women and men who were interested in the women's game. What we found is a real commitment to change, to advance gender equality, and they were actually interested. They are more fans of the women's game because they are buying into the sense of empowerment that women's football can bring, and they perceive themselves as part of that battle for equality. They want to advance the commercial growth of the game.

Therefore, I think that what this shows is that there are those deep commitments to the ideals of equality and inclusivity. If there are strong lapses in those—like the Spanish case that you started off talking about—if it is sexual abuse, sexual harassment, if there is mistreatment scandals, if there are concerns about leadership roles and those being male dominated, women's representation, lack of resources for players, they will boycott. They will not buy the shirts. They will maybe give up season tickets.

I think we have a real opportunity here to get these political messages right, not just because it is the right thing to do. Equality, it makes sense to do that, and also there is a business case to do so. The policies and practices that create equality and inclusivity—equal pay, fans' codes of conduct, anti-harassment policies—are the things that are truly business decisions because then you are attracting people to the sport. That is part of the reason in comparison to the work that I have led on fans of the

men's game. It is part of what they are interested in. They also feel positively about brands that partner with women's football, especially those that focus on equality. Again, there is a business case there as well as the fact that it is the right thing to do, but there is a business case in terms of investment and that ran across the US and the England dataset.

Chair: Because what Julie wants to ask flows very neatly from that, I am going to come to Rupa and Jane in a moment and just move straight to Julie, please.

Q75 **Julie Elliott:** You have jumped round our question order, but it makes more sense.

Good morning. Beth, I want to go back to some of the things you were talking about: the sustainability and not comparing women's football financially with men's football. There have been a lot of mistakes and financial difficulties in the men's games, whether it is football, rugby, whatever. Is there an opportunity here, not just in women's football but in women's sport in general, to not make those mistakes and set up a different model of how things are funded and work to make it much more sustainable? I wonder if you could talk to that and then if anybody else has anything to add, please do.

Dr Clarkson: Absolutely, and just to use Dame Caroline's words earlier on, you said "innovation", and forging your own path is innovation. I think there is a little bit of a misconception that these are small, agile businesses. I would personally disagree with that because they are now housed strategically within the umbrella of immense professional clubs. Therefore, decisions are not done in the same way that a small, agile business could click their fingers and do something different tomorrow, because they are within a governance structure that requires the general manager, the CEO, to have to then ask someone above within the board of directors and so on—

Q76 **Julie Elliott:** Is that all sports or just in football?

Dr Clarkson: Just speaking on football for a second. I know that wasn't quite your question as such, but just speaking a little bit on forging your own path it links back to innovation. Yes, to speak to your point in terms of learning lessons, absolutely, and I think it is well documented in the fan-led review and some of the lessons perhaps that the women's game could learn. I think we are probably around the governance structures conversation a little bit in terms of what that might look like. We have mentioned the Carney report as well, and I do not know how that links together with this Committee's intentions and recommendations and how they overlap. However, there are a lot of things that Dr Pope and I contributed to that report that would be of direct relevance to your question in terms of what we can learn.

I do not think I am answering your question and I do not want to waffle, but if I have not, could I just ask you to—

Q77 **Julie Elliott:** I am really looking at the sustainability of funding, not just in women's football—women's football is included but all women's sport, as it becomes professional, larger and more popular with the wider community. The men's games, whether it is football, rugby, cricket, whatever, have all made dreadful mistakes and there are huge problems within the financial situation of all those systems. We are not starting with a blank page, but we are not very far along the page. I am just wondering if there is a way that we can avoid the mistakes that the men have made in their various games and set women's sport, particularly professional sport, on a much more sustainable footing and not make those mistakes. Because we do not have all the legacy of all the history of what they have done—vested interests and all that. That is what I am getting at. I do not know whether you want to add or if anybody else wants to come in.

Dr Clarkson: If I may just briefly, there are two things to that. The first is free to air as well as subscription packages. That is the first major, big lesson. That is where men's rugby and cricket went wrong. They put their sports behind paywalls. There is research by Dr Dan Plumley and colleagues that showed a direct link to decreased participation from doing that, so that is the first big, major lesson.

The second part to that—and then please let my colleagues take over from me—is with regards to funding streams. What can we do there? A great example is the Birmingham City women's side between 2017 and 2019. If I can call on some figures here, the way that we do that is to help to bring down reliance on central funding. We have seen commercial funding increase, which has enabled us to be able to do. The FA's direct funding, from a percentage point of view, was able to slowly come down between those years, moving down from 18%, 13%, 12%, starting to come down as commercial revenue was able to be generated—67%, 75%, increasing year on year. We can see that for Man City 80% of its income comes from commercial income sponsorships. That is the growth in women's football.

Do we want to go and learn from America? Sure, five years ago, absolutely, my answer is yes. I used to live there. I agree. Now, no. We are brilliant. We are forging a path. We are the innovators, which makes it quite hard, but it is us and so it is up to us—

Julie Elliott: Because their teams are very college based, aren't they?

Dr Clarkson: Yes, we are then getting into talent pathways and then that is probably a further question.

Julie Elliott: Does anybody else want to add to that?

Dr Nicholson: I would say first off that if you want women's sport to take a different path to men's sport, it needs to be run by its own organisations, and there needs to be at least a move towards devolution, whereby you have a devolved governance model, whereby there might

be an umbrella structure but you have women's committees who are staffed by people who are prioritising and making decisions for women's sport, because that is not what is happening at the moment. We still have a system whereby structurally the people who are making the key decisions are largely men, who largely have a background in men's sport and prioritise men's sport. I would say that would be the first drum that I would bang, which I will keep doing throughout the Committee session.

The second point is that women's sport is a product, and we need to think about how we market it more effectively. A great example of that has been seen in The Hundred, which is a new cricket competition, or it was new in 2021. We have now had three iterations of it. I did a bit of research with colleagues at Bournemouth looking at the impact of the way in which the ECB marketed The Hundred. If you put more women in the marketing more women will attend. It is as simple as that. You would think that that was obvious, but if you look at the way a lot of sport is marketed, apparently it is not very obvious. Those are the two things I would say.

Professor Pielichaty: Thinking about ticket prices, sometimes you see tickets for £1, £2, trying to get people there, but just a word of caution on having very low ticket prices for women's football—this is probably about three or four years ago—is that you are setting a value on the product you are seeing. I understand it more for families, maybe children at that, but as an adult ticket price when you spend something that is cheaper than a cup of coffee, you are saying, "I might go, I might not. I have only spent £2. I won't bother actually because it's raining." What you are doing is setting a value. You are putting a value on that, so ticket prices need to be effectively positioned to be appropriate to that level.

We have not mentioned it yet, but it is also important to remember that the way women's football has been structured is that the players themselves have taken on—I don't know if it is a pressurised role or one that they have taken on themselves to market the game, to take on a pioneering role, to try to push forward the game themselves rather than just focusing on being elite performers. They are being very out there with their social media image, being very personable. I think that they sometimes may have a price to pay for how far you can push something, putting the pressure on the players themselves to market a sport with the burden of years of marginalisation.

It is something very difficult to place on players themselves when they really—I am not speaking on their behalf—want to play and want to play the best they can. How do we build upon that or leave it? It is just something to consider.

Professor Pope: The only other thing I would quickly throw in—because I know you have other areas that you want to address—is, yes, I completely agree there is an opportunity to learn loads here. What we need to make sure is that the women's side of the game is still core

business. Beth and I wrote a paper on this a few years ago, the way in which a team gets relegated from the premier league or whatever it might be and the first thing to go—"What is the first thing we can cut?"—is the women's club. There are still too many examples of that happening. Yes, I completely agree that there are lessons to be learned, but we have to find a way where that is no longer the case and, "Where can we make the cuts here?" or, "What are the salaries?" It is awful but there are far too many examples.

Q78 **Julie Elliott:** Broadcasting rights are very connected to the sustainability of the game. They are a huge thing in women's sport. We had the eleventh-hour agreement on broadcasting rights for the FIFA Women's World cup, but in a wider sense do you think women's sport is undervalued in terms of broadcasting rights? Because women's sport is now getting massive numbers watching. What comes first? Do we get better money from the broadcasters, or do we need more people, and do the games need to grow? How do we square the circle?

Professor Pope: I think it is fair to say that if you do not show it, we cannot grow it. Back to my earlier point, it was only in 2015 that we had the BBC televising these games and making them publicly accessible. We have just seen with the recent World cup that we can generate hype from this. We can get the audience figures there if we are showing it. We are showing it well; I am not talking about poor coverage there. I think that would be the point I would want to make, that going hand in hand. We have to find a way to do that, to then grow the fan base. I don't know if others want to chip in on that.

Dr Nicholson: In relation to Beth's point about it being a bit of a decision between getting a higher value on your broadcast rights and it being on subscription television versus getting a lower value and it being on free to air, that is a mistake. I am particularly familiar with men's cricket going off free-to-air television in 2005, which was a huge mistake in retrospect.

The current situation, whereby the ECB is bundling the rights to men's and women's cricket together, means that it is very difficult for us to know what value broadcasters might put on women's cricket. I personally think it would be high, but it would be nice if some people—possibly women but also male allies—were able to make that decision for themselves about whether they wanted to try to put all women's cricket in this country on the BBC, whereas at the moment that decision is being made for them.

Julie Elliott: Are there any other comments on financial sustainability? No. Thank you.

Q79 **Dr Rupa Huq:** Hi, everyone. I am the ex-academic before you today. We have all talked about how high profile the Lionesses have made international women's football. Panini stickers—you would not have imagined that a few generations ago. We can all name Chloe Kelly from Ealing and Sarina Wiegman. All these people are now household names,

but is there something under the surface that about football maybe crowding out other sports? I am glad you have mentioned hockey and cricket a bit, but it feels like we have this headline thing at international level. Whereas under the surface we know that in the football White Paper, there are no targets for any of equality, diversity, inclusion. It has just been brushed under the carpet. Even the Carney review has been mentioned. The big thing about pay is a huge oversight.

I asked a question on this. They said, "In due course we'll look at it properly." Is there a danger that football, and international top level football, is taking up all the airspace and underneath there is other stuff that football is not so great at, and other sports are in danger of being crowded out?

Professor Pielichaty: I think this could be a conversation about football in general. When you open your newspaper's back page, football is everywhere in the UK, and I suppose the success of the women's game has replicated, if you like, the dominance of football generally within our society. So often other sports are trying to get airspace and time to be recognised. Just think about the excellent performance of the Roses in the netball as well recently. We have had a fantastic summer of women's sport, but I do think those sports can work together. There was a fantastic social media dialogue between the Lionesses and the Roses via social media, and wishing one another luck, and that popularises and creates space for both those sports.

What we do not want to do is try to be so drawn to getting your voice heard for one particular sport that you dominate it in that way and push others aside. You are right, it has to be using the sport for generally getting issues around discrimination and gender-based violence and suchlike on to the top play. You are right; you could almost utilise women's football as an innovator, as we have mentioned.

The FIFPRO policy is now around maternity rights for women players. That can be used as something for other clubs to learn—policies in place around childcare, maternity, that kind of thing, which had not been there until about two to three years ago. That was not even a thing. What would your maternity rights be if you were a player? It is utilising that and using women's football potentially as a, "Well, they're doing it so we need that," and utilising it in a positive way. It could crowd out a market that is already squeezed for women's sport, so the real issue is not women's football taking over; it is making more space generally for women in sport.

Q80 **Dr Rupa Huq:** I have a local example from over the weekend. I went to see Ealing hockey club, and hockey is associated as "jolly hockey sticks"—a bit like lacrosse or something, one of those elitist sports—but they are finding that the FA is ripping up a lot of pitches that used to be 2G and turning them into 3G, so you cannot play anything else. You can only play rugby and football there.

A lot of girls I spoke to have come to hockey because they found football quite toxic. We know that there is corruption at the top level, but over the weekend we saw this thing with an under-sevens club where a parent punched a referee. A lot of people, girls and boys—and interestingly, in hockey they have mixed teams. What do you think of the idea of mixed teams and about this idea that football is just nasty and toxic? In some junior and even kids' leagues they shield the kids so that they cannot hear the parents effing and blinding.

Professor Pielichaty: Sorry, I am dominating slightly, but this is a society problem. Toxicity in our spaces where children are trying to play sport is a society problem. It will not be dealt with by sport on its own. This is inappropriate behaviour.

If I may, it is more complex than just saying football or sport is toxic. In my work at the University of Lincoln I looked at this thing called the sanctuary paradox. It was the idea that girls played football as a safe haven, an escape, a space where they could be in a sanctuary area. The irony comes from they were receiving abuse—football banter—based on the fact they were playing football. The discrimination was coming from their space of escapism, so you have this problematic area, where football is on the one hand a space for transformation, an escape, and on the other it is the sole reason for which you are receiving this. There is a complexity to this that cannot be undermined by looking at it in this area.

Professor Pope: I was going to say with the examples you have given, just listen to what we are talking about here, the abuse, children wanting to play sport, and we are talking about parents on the side lines and what is going on. It is not a problem just for girls' football, boys' football—it is incredible. My point is that in terms of the gender split it is that whole idea of, "This is girls' appropriate sport, and this is boys' appropriate sport." That is what we are potentially teaching, if that is what is happening. We should have opportunities for boys and girls to play whichever sport they want. If boys want to play hockey, fine. If girls want to play football, fine.

That is the point, yet when we talk about football and that level, at the youth game, the leadership game, the fans—this goes back to my research around masculinity and football being this domain for men, and a space where men can still prove that supposedly they are real men, whatever format that might look like. Despite these wider changes that have happened in society, that still holds and we still cling on to that.

If I refer you to the survey results—qualitative results from just under 2,000 men—we found that the most dominant group was misogynistic masculinities. We were looking at men football fans and their attitudes towards women's sport in three categories. It was not all doom and gloom. Just under a quarter were in the progressive attitudes group, so these were men football fans who were in support of what we are talking about today—more media coverage. They spoke about how they had all

these sexist attitudes, saw it on the TV and it changed them from being sexist to being a fan of the women's game. That is brilliant, but the key headline was that three quarters of the men were in the openly misogynistic group. They did not even think that women should play sport—they should not have access to doing that.

Some of the comments that were made in that study were absolutely awful, with extreme hostility to increasing media coverage. This was all just seen as part of a PC agenda and a complete backlash against women invading what is seen as this traditionally male space. If girls did want to play football or do sport, then it certainly should not be a sport such as football— "That is the men's preserve."

Probably quite tellingly there was a small number in the covert misogynistic attitudes group. These were 8% of the fans. They would say in public, if they were here now, openly progressive things. They would tell us what they think is the right thing to say, but then when they went into safe, male-dominated spaces—the football stadium, maybe the pub, maybe a male-dominated workspace—that is when they would say what they really think, which was misogynistic attitudes.

I feel like we are in this area where there can be more media coverage and we can have this movement towards progress, but what we also know is that whenever you see gender equality, a move towards gender equality, especially if it is in male-dominated spaces, like football, like politics, the backlash is always harder. That is exactly what we see.

It starts at a young age. The Fawcett Society discuss how stereotypes are contributing to mental health crises among children, the impact on girls' body image, eating disorders, and male suicide rates. It is in our interests to do something about this. That is not to mention the impact it can have on girls' choice of career, whether they choose to play football, and the gender pay gap.

We must tackle this last bastion of masculinity and I think everything that we are speaking about today goes back to this. Kids are learning it, and they are learning it at an early age. They are there, they see mum and dad, and that is how people behave when they watch the match. I personally find that really sad, but we must start doing something about this early. As soon as they walk in the door at primary school, they learn gender stereotypes and that is even more reason to open up those difficult conversations about these things: addressing sexism in sport, addressing sexism in society and what is acceptable to treat young girls and women.

It is something that I have started to make a little bit of headway with. I did a five-minute film on "Is football sexist?" that I have just launched, and I am hoping to get that out into primary schools, to open up some of these difficult conversations. I am not claiming that itself is going to be enough, and ideally you would have Iain Wright or somebody like that pioneering this campaign, but I feel that the Department for Education

must look at curriculum and what we are teaching, and we must teach about boys and girls and equality of opportunity. This is what it stems from—the rotten core. That is what we need to do here. We must address sexism from the start at an early age and then through to adulthood.

Chair: I am worried that we are slightly teetering into future questions here. Can we try to keep our responses to the point and as pithy as possible? Sorry, Rupa.

Q81 **Dr Rupa Huq:** I also wanted to ask about research, because I always do, and also intersectionality, because we all know Lauren James, but what about in the boardroom, what about coaches, management, all that stuff? We know that audiences have mushroomed, but what about at all the other levels and looking at BAME people, class, all those things? Is this the stuff that is being funded by research councils? I googled, and in 2008 I externally examined a PhD on this. It was like a "Bend It Like Beckham" type of thing, with Aarti Ratna on Asian women playing football. Did it stop there or are people funding this and is there an appetite for more research on this?

Dr Clarkson: There have been three papers and that is one of them. The answer is no, and one of my last points is going to be about better funding of knowledge generation around this. There is limited research. There are four of us in front of you, and I can probably count on two hands the number of other people you could have asked here, and that is it. That is the point and not all of us are full-time in this world either any more. That is part of the problem. We are flavour of the month at the moment, so we particularly welcome applications on these topics, but we will always be 50% of the population and, therefore, we always need to have funding streams that investigate women's issues in all parts of society, but particularly in sport.

I might stay very closely on research and speak to those four areas that you just spoke on. On intersectionality, we have recently conducted some research with black women who coach in football, and we are the first to do so. Essentially, you have different experiences as different people. I experience the world very differently as a gay woman with a disability than I might do if I was a straight woman who was able-bodied. That same premise existed here. There was a double burden that those women experienced—challenging language. The onus was on them, and they felt othered by some of that.

I know language has been spoken about in this Committee, and you are probably quite tired of that—fighting against the old guard, micro-aggressions that were traumatising and difficult to resist, having to downplay your ethnic identity to fit in, not wanting to stand out, not wanting to speak differently, stereotypically perceived as the angry black woman trope. "Being careful" was a phrase that was repeatedly said to us in interviews, which was difficult to hear. There is that in terms of coaching.

In terms of leadership, on boards, I will just speak to research on that. My colleague Dr Cristina Filippo and I recently collated research in other spheres, because there is nothing in football, or there has not been anything in football, about going out into business domains to have a look at what we can learn and how gender diversity and financial sustainability are linked and how it can be a competitive strategy and advantage. What we found was that there is a critical mass. When you have three or more women on a board, generally speaking that links to more positive outcomes, depending on the league. I know in your first panel of evidence when you heard from the two experts that came in to speak to you, I think 25% was the percentage that was spoken about in terms of women on international boards, if I recall correctly.

In football we are talking about between 4.2% and 11.3%, so we are significantly lower than that. Why that is important, apart from the fact that it is competitive advantage, is that people perceive that there are less problems when you have gender diversity on your board. It is good for PR and reputation management if nothing else.

Hopefully that speaks to some of the research on those points that you have mentioned there, Rupa.

Q82 **Jane Stevenson:** Thank you to the panel. I have grown up watching men's football generally and I love the game. I also love watching women's football in more recent years. I do perceive quite significant differences between style of play, respect for the referee and various things. I was lucky enough to go to a Lionesses' warm-up match for the Euros and the crowd demographic was notable. The singing was about an octave and a half higher than at a men's game. There were lots of positives there.

With everything you have said this morning, it feels a little bit hostile towards the men's game. Pitting men's and women's football against each other seems quite limiting, perhaps. As audiences change—at the moment it is a much more family audience at women's football—would you expect more traditional men's football fans who are season ticketholders at our premier league clubs to jump on the bandwagon a little bit and enjoy the women's game? Those of us who love football love watching football and the skill and the feel of the crowd. Do we seek that in women's football, or should we seek it if it stays as a family-friendly, theme park, playground version of a football match? I would hate women's football to be seen as something that we all go to as a family then dad goes off to watch the "proper match". Economically as well, if we are selling family tickets, I presume that has economic consequences in the long run. Have you thought about where you would like the crowd at women's football to develop from, and where would you have that ideal mix? I hope there is a question in there somewhere.

Dr Nicholson: Can I just jump in with a brief cricket example, again from the research that we did into audiences at The Hundred? Even though we do see that the audiences are more diverse, so there are more

women and families going along, which I think is brilliant, one of the issues with men's football and men's cricket and other men's sports is that perhaps women feel that these are male-dominated spaces and they do not feel welcome. They think, "Sport is not something for me." What we saw at The Hundred was getting men through the door was important from a women's cricket perspective because it changes their outlook and their perspective on women's sport. We found that 49% of men who attended The Hundred in the first year had changed their perception of women's cricket. In focus groups we did, largely speaking what we heard was very positive. We heard from men who said, "Oh, I thought it would be rubbish and it was really good, and it has completely changed my perceptions," and we had men who previously might have fallen into one of Stacey's categories of being a little bit more on the misogynist side say, "Oh, well, why aren't the women being paid the same as the men?"

To speak to your point, it is important that we do get men to go along, whether in person or to watch it on the TV. If you can do that then you are winning some of that battle against attitudes.

Professor Pielichaty: It is important to say that there are a lot of men who are fully supportive of women's sport, who are absolute allies, who are the bedrocks and have been at the bedrock of grassroots women's sport. They are dads. There are dads who have invented a team because they wanted their daughters to play. These are dads that have formulated and been the original allies and advocates for women's sports. It is the dads who are still there watching with their family, and it is families such as this that have a real gender parity within their family spaces. It is these people who can be utilised to make a difference. There are amazing women and men out there.

I did not want this panel to be hostile towards men's football. This is not about that. It is about society being a place for everyone and using men, women, everyone, gender-diverse people who do not fit into these categories, and doing something they love and are passionate about and being able to do it. That is important to remember, that there are advocates out there to support this and facilitate this, and there have been for a long time. It is just giving people a professional environment to play in, in a professional way, because paying women to play sport does not mean it is a professional environment.

Professor Pope: I think you are spot on with the observation that it is too simplistic to categorise it as men's football and women's football. Like you, I have grown up with watching men's football and I am also a fan of women's football, so you see both. Of all the fans I have interviewed, it is important to make the point that no one wants to take that magic away. No one wants to take away a good match and the match-day environment. That is not what we are trying to do here.

Looking at the fans of the women's game has highlighted that a good match-day environment must be an inclusive match-day environment,

and that is where the comparisons come into this. When looking at the fans of the women's game, what we found is that the key motivation for many of the supporters was that it was a space where they felt safe, a space that was more welcoming to LGBTQ+ fans, for women, for families. Some of them had been turned off from going to men's football matches and that is the issue there. Yes, we must grow the women's audiences but with the men's game as well you need to change those behaviours. They were contrasting the culture of what they saw as inclusivity with men's football and saying it is a far safer environment. There is less vulgarity and drunkenness, less physical aggression. They would give the example of comparing the European championships, when England hosted the men's and the women's Euros, and we all know the scenes that followed that and the number of arrests. They saw that as an angry, hostile environment whereas in contrast this is more inclusive.

I think there is probably more for men's football to learn in that respect, in making sure that, yes, it is not everyone by any means, but the research I have done with fans of men's football shows that not all women do feel safe. There is that constant need to prove that you are a "real fan" and they were coming up against high levels of sexism and misogyny. There were a lot of consequences to entering that traditional, last male preserve and it is that issue that needs to be addressed in that respect.

Dr Clarkson: I would just like to say before we move on that I consult in men's football, so if it appears that I am in any way hostile, that is completely not the case. It allows me to see a fuller picture and the good work and good initiatives that are going on that sometimes are not necessarily promoted as well as they should be.

Jane Stevenson: With a few more years on the clock than our panel, the terraces certainly have changed since I first went to Molineux in the 1970s, but thank you very much.

Chair: It is interesting, Rafaelle, what you say about The Hundred. I was at the very first Hundred match at the Oval and it was, as you say, brilliant, with a very diverse audience having a fabulous time and a brilliant game of cricket. The next morning the news radio programmes that I was listening to—I listen to two separate ones—were dominated by a debate over whether this signalled the death knell of the long form of cricket. At no point in any of those radio programmes did anyone mention that that first game had been a women's cricket match. It chimed with me because it was the first time that I had heard women's sport spoken about without anyone feeling the need to describe it as women's sport. I do think it is important to praise The Hundred and England cricket for what they have done to bring that to fruition, because it has really broken a few ceilings.

Q83 **Kevin Brennan:** Good morning, everyone. Much as I admire the achievements of the Lionesses, I want women's sport to reach the stage

where the Welsh women's team can beat the Lionesses, and also at rugby. To that extent I want to give a shout out to my constituent, Professor Laura McAllister, who won 24 caps for Wales in her career and is now a vice-president of UEFA and doing brilliant work in this area, as is my wonderful colleague Tonia Antoniazzi, who is the MP from Gower, who won nine caps for Wales at rugby. That is my agenda, anyway, in all this.

To get serious, a lot of what I was going to ask has already been asked inevitably, as happens. One of the things I was going to ask more generally was about sexism and misogyny and how it manifests itself. I think we have explored that quite widely, but the sub-question to that was: is there evidence of sexism towards female athletes becoming more of a problem as women's sport grows? Is it staying the same?

Professor Pope: We did a study looking at men football fans. It was the first piece of research to look at how men are responding to the growth of the women's game and to directly examine that. The reason for looking at that, and at this particular point in time, is because this has come on the back of the increased visibility of the women's game. It was almost to see what the response is to the increased media coverage and the wider changes that we are seeing in society in terms of access to the sport. It is there, it is on TV, and it is in the newspapers.

It would be great to go back to do that further down the line because this is a rapidly evolving space, but certainly now, as I mentioned earlier, the fact that there was such a high level of misogynistic attitudes shows that there is that backlash to progress. We know that every time you get progress you get backlash to it. It is not everybody. I am not saying that and that is not what the data showed, but there is a high level, especially with football having that last bastion of the male preserve in England at least. It still carries that baggage. I know that there are others who would look at social media and the levels of abuse.

Q84 **Kevin Brennan:** Some of the stuff you see on social media is shocking, as was the racism when the England men's team reached the final. It was shocking and extraordinary.

On that point, I was going to go on, but Dr Rupa Huq has already strayed into this area to ask about intersectionality. As a follow-up to that, because I know that a lot of Dr Clarkson's work is in this area, how would an intersectional approach to tackling discrimination affect efforts to stamp out sexism and misogyny from women's sport in practical terms?

Dr Clarkson: There are a couple of arguments. If you divided everybody up into each of their social identities, how do you then cover for all that? Essentially, one size does not fit all, so that is the conundrum. How do you cater for the fact that we are all different people in this room, and we will all need different things? How do you take an individual approach? If I may lean on an example where you might develop a workforce programme where it is all based on your individual needs, and your individual needs through needs assessment, for instance, then develop how you then access the support that you need. There might be a suite

of different development areas that could be catered for by a governing body or by whoever is running that programme and, therefore, it is individualised and you can pick on what you need. If it is the very stereotypical, "I need some help with confidence because I am in a space where I feel very unwelcome," then I can do that because there is a suite of content and support that I am able to pick on. That is how we do it in a very practical sense.

Q85 **Kevin Brennan:** I am conscious of time, and I want to leave some time for my colleague at the end. We talked a lot about cricket and there was the recent report into inequity in cricket, and we have done work on cricket and racism in this Committee. That report found that there was widespread sexism, classism and elitism in cricket. I am not asking if cricket is unique, but does cricket have a particular problem, or is this replicated in pretty much all other sports? Is there anybody who feels they would like to chip in on that?

Dr Nicholson: Cricket does have specific historical baggage that perhaps other sports—

Kevin Brennan: Women have still not played a test match at Lord's. That is incredible.

Dr Nicholson: Yes, which relates to my earlier point about the sports stadia in this country being men's sports stadia. Lord's is the home of men's cricket, to all intents and purposes, at the moment. Yes, I think cricket does have specific historical baggage, partly because—not to go into huge detail—it was very intertwined historically with conceptions of imperial masculinity. That is perhaps something that cricket has that other sports did not have to the same extent. I think that all sports have this problem, or would have very similar problems, with sexism and racism, but they just perhaps manifest differently in different sports, depending on the historical context.

Kevin Brennan: I am not going to press any further, so I will leave some time for my colleague.

Chair: Last but not least, Giles.

Q86 **Giles Watling:** Thank you very much for coming today. You are incredibly powerful advocates for equality, and you have taught me a lot. Thank you very much for that. I do not have long, but thank you for the time, Kevin.

We have covered a lot about governance, and I will come on to that very quickly because I think I have the answers. We touched on the experience of children when they go to school and the direction of travel, and how when you first arrive at school somehow these mores are given to you—that if you say netball, hockey and lacrosse, you think girls, but if you say rugby, football, cricket, you think boys. That should be breaking down, and I understand it is, but in my own personal experience when my twin daughters first went to school I said, "Okay, are they going to

learn to play cricket?" because I am keen on that. "Oh, no, we don't do that here." Now, I know that has changed at that school and things have moved on, but has there been research done in this area and what is it now showing? I think I am going to go to Dr Nicholson on that first.

Dr Nicholson: I defer to my colleagues on that.

Professor Pope: I would refer to the examples I was giving earlier. It is qualitative interviews, but I do many qualitative interviews, so drawing on 150 interviews of women's experience. These are fans of football, so they are passionate, and you would expect them to have had interest in these sports. They talk very clearly about that gender divide and I find it very striking, as I said earlier, that when they talk about the school experiences in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s you can see where it is coming from, but when they were giving me examples very recently or they were talking about their daughters who want to play, and this is very recent times, I can give you an example from the recent data set, "It was very much boys played the football, girls did netball, you did not get the choice." This was someone who was aged 28—"We didn't have any girls' football at my secondary school. It was a mixed school, but it was the classic netball and hockey for girls, football and rugby for boys", teaching those gender stereotypes from that point in time, basically, and "This is appropriate for boys, and this is appropriate for girls."

Q87 **Giles Watling:** I am very aware of the time, so my question is: are we moving in the right direction?

Professor Pope: We are, and as I said the initiative is fantastic, but I do not trust that will happen if you do not then find a way to enforce it. It is one thing to say equal access, but if you are not going to monitor it—I am hearing anecdotally in media interviews, with callers ringing in, speaking with teachers, "What is the guidance on this? Do we have to do this? Is this optional?" My point is, cricket or football, give girls access to it, but if you do not go back, given the levels of sexism and misogyny that we have been talking about today, and check that is happening—maybe we get an award for this or whatever—that sexism that runs through is moving but needs more work.

Q88 **Giles Watling:** I understand that governance sharing with men's sport is probably, from what you have said this morning, not the way to go. Would they benefit more from sharing expertise and resources with male counterparts, or would it be better to separate?

Dr Clarkson: This is where we have a difference of opinion on this panel, probably coming from our different research and different expertise in where that governance sits. I do not want to speak for both of us, but I think we agree that some delineation and differentiation between boards is an important part. I certainly think a recommendation would be to have a women's general manager, CEO, on the board of directors if we are going to continue, which I think we are, to have women's sections within men's professional football clubs.

Q89 **Giles Watling:** But you can learn from ongoing changes in men's sporting governance?

Dr Clarkson: Absolutely, but I would say that is probably the recommendation that I would give, that we do have that particular person that is there. It might be a woman, it might be a man, it might be somebody who is non-binary, but that is the point, that it is somebody to represent women's interests in that decision-making role.

Giles Watling: Thank you. I think that is all we have time for, Chair.

Q90 **Chair:** Thank you very much, Giles. Can I thank all our witnesses today for all your contributions? I know we are right at the edge of time, but is there anything that anyone wanted to say that they felt we had not covered before we conclude?

Professor Pielichaty: Very quickly on the point of PE, there is recent research being published around PE uniform, making it comfort over uniformity, so allowing for girls and boys to be comfortable to do sport. That was a massive reason for why they did not want to play, so we cannot underestimate the power of being comfortable in your environment.

Giles Watling: Excellent point. Thank you.

Chair: As we have just covered in the Women and Equalities Select Committee inquiry into this, although they have now made it possible for women hockey players to wear either shorts, skorts or skirts, there are no shorts that are currently designed specifically for female hockey players. Apparently, they are just small men, so we need the sports clothing manufacturers to lean into this and raise their game as well.

Thank you very much. You have all been outstanding today and we are grateful. If you do think of anything else you feel that we need to add to our inquiry, please do drop us a line afterwards.