



Select Committee on a National Plan for Sport and Recreation

Corrected oral evidence: National Plan for Sport and Recreation

Wednesday 16 December 2020

3.30 pm

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Members present: Lord Willis of Knaresborough (The Chair); Lord Addington; Baroness Blower; Baroness Brady; Baroness Grey-Thompson; Lord Hayward; Lord Knight of Weymouth; Lord Krebs; Baroness Morris of Yardley; Lord Moynihan; Baroness Sater; Lord Snape.

Evidence Session No. 3

Virtual Proceeding

Questions 20 - 25

Witnesses

I: Kirsty Cumming, Chief Executive Officer, Community Leisure UK; Nigel Harrison, Chief Executive Officer, Yorkshire Sport Foundation; Lee Mason, Chief Executive Officer, Active Partnerships Network.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witnesses

Kirsty Cumming, Nigel Harrison and Lee Mason.

Q20 The Chair: Welcome to our witnesses. Kirsty Cumming is the CEO of Community Leisure UK, Nigel Harrison is the CEO of Yorkshire Sport Foundation, and Lee Mason is the CEO of Active Partnerships Network. Thank you very much for joining us as our witnesses just before Christmas.

A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee's website. If you feel there is a mistake in something you have said, you can make corrections to the transcript, if necessary, by letting us know. When asking a question, Members will specify the first witness they would like to hear from. Please do not feel that you all have to answer every question. It is not compulsory.

It strikes me that there is no shortage of visions, strategies and plans, and indeed organisations primed to carry forward the central theme of getting the nation more active through sport and recreation, yet, at local level, organisation appears fragmented, delivery appears disjointed and there is a distinct lack of delivery metrics by which success is judged. Kirsty, do you agree with that assessment? If so, how should things be done differently.

Kirsty Cumming: Thank you, Lord Willis, for the invitation to attend this afternoon's session on behalf of our Community Leisure UK members.

In answer to your question, I think there is certainly a perception, and indeed a reality, that delivery is fragmented at local level. As you say, there is an abundance of vision and willingness to have national ideas and to drive things forward. That is indicative of the appetite and enthusiasm of the sector, which is great, but how it translates to local level is not always consistent.

I caveat that by saying that there is something to be said about local approaches being valued; looking at the different needs of different communities across the UK must not be undervalued. However, there are different approaches at local authority level on funding. Our members are all charitable trusts delivering leisure, culture and sports for local communities. Some receive funding from local authorities, but a small number receive no funding from local authorities. That is a bit of an indication of the value attached by local authorities to those services across the country.

There is an opportunity for us as a sector to work together more closely and more collaboratively. Some of that has come through in recent months during the Covid period, when there has been greater collaboration, greater discussion and more involvement of our members in creating and shaping some of those conversations. As a membership, we certainly had conversations about the idea of a national strategy, having some national principles and national KPIs that could be monitored and measured to show the contribution of the sector at

national level, while having the flexibility to adapt them at local level, with inputs according to local needs and different circumstances.

That approach could be taken forward. There are obviously lots of ongoing consultation about the future of public leisure, one of which is led by colleagues at ukactive. We need to look at how we take forward the results of some of those consultations in a joined-up way. National and local interaction needs to be ironed out as regards consistency and what would be beneficial at national level, while equally understanding local delivery mechanisms and the differences that need to be valued across communities.

The Chair: There is a tendency to think that reorganisation will somehow bring us better results. What we are interested in as a Committee is delivery on the ground and getting more people active much more quickly than in the past. I have yet to see any reorganisation that has brought those benefits quickly, and we end up a few years later having another reorganisation to rectify the problems. Delivery is what we are about.

Kirsty Cumming: Absolutely. There are pockets of great practice. As a sector, we do not recognise some of the great work and celebrate the things that are going on and that are having significant results. However, as I said, it is in pockets of best practice rather than being widespread across the country.

There is a need to look at longer-term investment in some of the projects. There is still a tendency in the sector for short-term funding; investment in pilot projects and programmes with very short funding cycles, with no real understanding of the timeframe to deliver long-term change and long-term results. There needs to be a bit of a rethink around investments in the longer term to ensure sustainability and to protect public leisure, so that it can thrive and deliver results over a five or 10-year period. We talk about a lot of things around prevention and the role of the sector in the preventive agenda. That is a longer-term outcome that we need to invest in and wait for the results over a realistic timeframe.

The Chair: Nigel, may I ask you the same question? Do you agree that it is fragmented, delivery is disjointed and that we seem to have taken our eye off the ball in getting delivery on the ground? Is that fair?

Nigel Harrison: I agree that it can look that way, given all the facets we need to have in place to get people active locally, such as Active Travel and the health systems in schools and clubs. There is also the entrepreneurship of organisations and charities, which take it upon themselves to be active. That is what we want to encourage, but it can seem extremely fragmented at the local level.

The second part of your question is, what can we do about it? For me, it is about connectivity. It is not necessarily a road map or a master plan for what takes place at local level. It is about how we get a sense of connectivity, communication and relationship locally, and indeed at local

authority level, to make things work more smoothly and collectively, so that people understand what others are doing.

Kirsty mentioned some great examples. There are examples through the local delivery pilots. We are fortunate in our area of Yorkshire; we have three local delivery pilots from Sport England. All three are working on connectivity, as we are, and there is a fantastic example in the centre of Bradford where we are creating community connectors. We are talking to the park people and they are involved. There is reclamation of allotments, for example, and more green space for physical activity. We are working on connections between schools and mosques in the area. When the kids go to madrassa, there is physical activity built in. It is a cracking example in a local place, but it takes capacity and local community connectors to do that.

There are some resources in the local delivery pilot, and that is brilliant. In other areas of Yorkshire, where we have less money, we are identifying crucial community champions. They are people who know and live in the area. They understand their communities and are able to connect things up, and people are able to go to them. The investment in those people has been tremendous. They are doing walking groups and outdoor exercise. There is lots of activity taking place at community level.

At a policy level—[inaudible]—metropolitan authorities, all large populations. It is about connecting the universities, the local authorities, the leisure providers and community sports clubs and so on. There are big organisations across those districts. We have put a bit of structure and hard-wiring in there. We have the likes of things called Active Bradford, Sport Leeds, Get Doncaster Moving and Everybody Active in Kirklees. They provide the hard-wiring and relationships to make sure that things are communicated more and happen in a much smoother way.

I am not saying that we are perfect; absolutely not. We have a long way to go, but there is investment in capacity to make sure that things are connected at a very local level, and then at district level where they are tied together. There is another level, of course, in West Yorkshire; we are making connections with combined authorities and integrated care partnerships in health. We are trying to connect that up. We have a long way to go.

The Chair: My concern is that you are basically reinforcing my question. You are simply bringing in lots more partners, which, to me, creates a great deal more difficulty. You do not need to answer that; it is just an observation.

Lee, we do not have a great deal of time, so could you address an issue that Andy Reed brought up last week? We were very interested in the review he had done of partnerships. How is the implementation of his recommendations going? Is there any evaluation that the Committee can see?

Lee Mason: It has been four years since the reviews that Andy Reed did, and there has been a huge amount of progress. He made quite a lot of recommendations. I can write to you with a more detailed response, but a few highlights come to mind.

He focused on the governance of the partnerships, probably in the context of wider governance issues in the sport and recreation sector. Most partnerships now are charities, and there is all the regulation that goes with being a charity. Those that are not are hosted within a local authority and benefit from the arrangements there and the connectivity that gives them to the local infrastructure.

In particular, over the last couple of years, every single one of the partnerships has achieved the highest level of the governance code. Some of the partnerships have five to 10 people, and they have the same level and standards of governance as organisations that are as big as the FA or the biggest organisations in our sector. I think that gives us a lot of reassurance that that has been addressed.

Leadership was a key point that Andy talked about. We have done a lot of work to develop and transform leadership across the network, both at board level—with boards showing much more accountability and responsibility for the organisation—and in wider leadership. It is taking a different view of leadership, not just managing the organisations but, as, hopefully, you gathered from Nigel's previous comments, being much more influential leaders across the system and across an area, working with senior leaders in health and local government and with police and crime commissioners; you name it. It is about trying to have much more collaborative leaders across the piece.

Performance measurement and management has evolved radically over the period. Sport England is a major funder of Active Partnerships and performance manages the partnerships. From its point of view, there is a much more collaborative approach, based on self-improvement driven by the partnerships, and much less about bureaucracy. Even there, every partnership over the last two years has achieved the Quest accreditation, which is a sector-wide kitemark of quality in the industry.

The final important point Andy made was the extent to which partnerships should have local flexibility, or the extent to which we should look for uniformity and consistency across the country. That is where there has been the most radical change over the last few years. We are moving towards a much more bottom-up, place-based approach, embracing local variance. Every partnership serves very different communities with very different needs. That should also be welcomed.

Lord Krebs: Nigel, you described Bradford as "a cracking example". Could you tell us what the change in proportion of people in Bradford being physically active and meeting the Government's recommendations has been as a result of that cracking example?

Nigel Harrison: That particular project was aimed at five to 14 year-olds. In Bradford, they have taken baseline studies of children in schools and put accelerometers on them, measuring when they are active and when they are not. Baseline studies have been done. The outcomes will take place over the next few years.

As for Active Lives results across the district of Bradford, inactivity levels went down quite well over the last few years. They went down about 3% or 4%, but they have started to rise again over the last couple of years. That is the issue. We need better understanding at local level.

The Chair: I think we would like some numbers, Nigel. That is a lot of words, but it means nothing to us in the Committee unless we have some hard facts. Do we have any hard facts?

Nigel Harrison: I can send you numbers. The inactivity levels in Bradford were about 31%, which is people doing less than 30 minutes a week. It went to about 26%, but I would like to confirm that as a follow-up point. In the last couple of years, they have gone up again. The project I was describing, Lord Krebs, was for five to 14 year-olds. That measurement is ongoing.

Q21 **Baroness Blower:** Kirsty, the Committee has heard that the top six activities for people are walking, running, gym and fitness, cycling, swimming and football. What do you see as the implications for the sport and recreation sector if people are exercising in informal ways rather than through organised participation in sport and recreation?

Kirsty Cumming: It is a good question about informal participation, but certainly public leisure, and our members in particular, are ideally positioned to address both the formal and informal aspects of sport participation. They see themselves more in the community hub space than in sports venues per se. That is important, and it is an evolution that has been happening over recent years. There are a lot of community group activities, such as Knit and Natter, that go far beyond sports and physical activity in the traditional sense.

A lot of our members use their venues as hubs for walking groups. There is an opportunity for walking groups to meet at a central point and go back to it, so that there is a social aspect in the venue. An increase in informal participation perhaps encourages people to venture into areas where they would not have gone, and to discover other sports, physical activity or exercise opportunities as a result. The key that we often miss as a sector when we are having these conversations is the idea of fun. Fun and enjoyment are what will keep people active. The activity has to be enjoyable, whatever it is, and that is the core principle that should run through anything.

I see the formal and the informal going very much hand in hand. We have to recognise that here in the UK we do not have the best climate or weather for people wanting to exercise outdoors during winter, or when it is cold or dark, so there has to be an indoor offering. That is where the

idea of community hubs and more informal inside space comes into its own.

Baroness Blower: I am very interested in the responses to the next question, which is going to be asked by Baroness Brady, so I am very happy to leave it at that.

Q22 **Baroness Brady:** Kirsty, this is about sport in the community. What do you think is the state of affairs in distribution of and access to green spaces, sports clubs, leisure clubs and other sport and recreation services?

Kirsty Cumming: It is a question of accessibility. You mentioned green spaces. There is a trend to look beyond venues as bases for activity, which has perhaps been the traditional model. In our membership, there is real recognition that it is not about putting on activities in venues and expecting people to come. It is about putting on activities where people want to take part, whether that is in a green space or a community hall, or in part of the school estate. That is where the principle of a much more joined-up approach across partners within communities, and across different policy areas, is important, so that it becomes embedded across communities. Accessibility will come through enabling activities to take place where communities want them to take place, rather than the traditional approach of "Build a centre and they will come", which I think is very out of date. Our members have moved beyond that principle.

Baroness Brady: Is there recognition that there is unequal distribution of facilities across the country?

Kirsty Cumming: Quite honestly, I do not have real insight or data into the distribution of facilities to hand. Perhaps we could follow that up in a written submission rather than speculating on it at the moment.

Baroness Brady: I think it is important, because the Committee has seen reports showing that the most economically deprived areas have less available good-quality public green space. That has to have an impact on people's sports and activities, surely.

Kirsty Cumming: Absolutely, yes. One of the phrases that you used there was good quality, which it is also important to highlight. It is not about just having a facility. It is about good-quality facilities that will be welcoming and attractive. The word "welcoming" is also important to highlight in getting people engaged and active, when they are perhaps not traditionally active or in the mindset of coming from an active background. They need welcoming and accessible spaces.

I do not have information to hand about the number of facilities across deprived areas. I could certainly follow up with further details.

Lee Mason: I agree. I do not have data in front of me either, but my experience would back up your point that the most disadvantaged areas have worse access to some of the facilities. There has been a trend over the years to focus on big, major facilities. Actually, what we need are

local and very accessible facilities that people can walk or cycle to in their very local community. From my experience, we definitely see differences in availability and access in our most disadvantaged communities. That is why our networks are increasingly focusing our efforts and work on the areas and groups that need our support more, to try to help communities to come up with solutions to those challenges.

Nigel Harrison: Yes, all places are different. I agree with what Lee was saying. There is unequal distribution of facilities and access to green space; it feels that way, although there are strengths in the communities we are working with and we are making the best of those strengths.

Crucial to me is not just the distribution of facilities and space but their accessibility. A lot of people tell us, "Well, I would go out, but I don't feel safe in a particular area", or "There's not enough street lighting". There is fear of crime. We have to be really cautious and work with communities, and drive down not just to having the facilities but how we can access them better.

Last week, there was the opening up of some floodlights and CCTV in a village called Denaby in Doncaster. That was because people needed access to the Craggs in the open air, and they would not use it before. It is about working with communities at that level to start opening up access. It is not just distribution; we are concerned about access as well.

Baroness Blower: I want to come back on green spaces in general, but parks in particular. I live in a London borough, and the leader of my council is always saying that one of our parks is the borough's most intensively used leisure facility. A lot goes on in the parks and quite a lot of it is self-organised, but some of it is generated by the local authority.

I wonder how common that is. I do not go to many parks beyond where I live. Perhaps Nigel could answer that, and either of the other two who want to come back quickly. Those things exist, and they need to be maintained. They are pretty accessible for anybody.

Nigel Harrison: Urban parks and green parks are absolutely essential if we are to get people active. It is not just having them open; it is putting activities in the parks and doing something about them to attract people to them. As I said before, not all parks feel safe for individuals in communities. We have to get underneath the reasons why people might and might not use parks. As you said, Baroness Blower, parks are an absolutely essential resource that we can use for activity.

Lord Addington: Casual usage has a tendency to disappear as the weather gets bad. Have you done a structure that says that we will continue to get people coming back on a more casual basis, as opposed to being part of a bigger structure? Do you have a model for where that works best? That would be very good to hear about, because it will take some resource.

The Chair: Who do you want to answer that?

Lord Addington: Whoever wants to dive in first. For instance, school kids are easy. It is adults we worry about.

The Chair: Adults' access to areas.

Nigel Harrison: I do not know if I can directly answer the question, but there is a change in how people are experiencing physical activity and sport. That has been as a result of going from traditional to more individual and flexible activity. It is about flexibility. It is about being able to do things when people want to do them, rather than being tied down to do something all day on a Saturday, for example.

We as a sector, and as providers, need to adapt to that, and be more flexible and nimble about how we provide those activities. We must accept from time to time, as Lord Addington was referring to, that people are more inclined to go from one activity to another but still be active. We need to ensure, going back to the connectivity bit earlier, that connections take place when people try to experience different activities in different places.

Baroness Morris of Yardley: I want to briefly follow up the answers to the original question, which quite surprised me, although I agreed with what people said. What I understood was that some people would say that some of the big capital projects that have been built were good things and would be on their list of progress made, but you seemed to be quite sceptical about their reach. That is something I agree with, but it is quite a big thing to say. Governments of all colours would want to claim credit for the large amount of capital spending put into them.

I want to push it to the other extreme. I take your point and I understand it completely, but they have not been wasted buildings. Could you say a bit about the group for whom they have been a real asset? Are they great for those living round the corner, or are they great for already committed, competitive sports people who have a brilliant capital facility in which to practise? Who are they good for, if they are not good for the ones who are being a bit left out?

Kirsty Cumming: Yes, I take the point. There is a balance with the bigger capital investments in buildings—the more flagship facilities. We are looking for a balance between the large facilities and the smaller community venues, or indeed alternative venues that are not traditionally part of the sector.

As to who has benefited, there is a huge amount to be said for the benefits to the local community of offering a place of aspiration. People using those facilities are athletes or on a journey to becoming elite athletes, and they are often role models for local communities. There is a real sense of worth for communities in seeing somebody in their local area taking part in an activity at that level or going to one of those facilities.

There is no doubt that at elite level those facilities are absolutely valuable, but how they translate to inspiring people in local areas is also very important. Hopefully, making them feel accessible to communities gives a sense of ownership in those facilities. There is also the economic value of people wanting to visit and train. When people travel to use facilities, there is an economic value as well as the more obvious value of their being sports venues.

The Chair: I am a little disappointed at this stage. I thought that, between the three of you, you might have some grand idea as to how in fact we can open up these spaces. Last night, I watched a programme about the Peak District National Park, the first national park, which came about when poor people working in industrial areas of Manchester and Sheffield looked at the Peak District but were not able to access it because it was all owned by somebody else. Are we not in a similar situation, where we need that sort of radical thinking? If you are not doing it, who is going to do it for us? Anyone can answer that. Lee, come on, you are bursting to disagree with me.

Lee Mason: No. I would say that there are some good examples of what you suggest. Increasingly across the network, in response to what we are talking about, many of our partnerships are using empty shops, empty facilities and are getting community halls reopened that perhaps have not been used. We will all be familiar with the idea that school facilities are not utilised to their maximum.

Over the last six to nine months, we have been doing a concerted piece of work on why that is, and why schools do not typically always open their facilities for use or, where they do, it is not to their own pupils or to the people we might want to use those facilities. We have some incredible findings and some real progress is being made. We are managing to get schools to open their facilities, or at least we were pre-Covid, which has obviously created a whole set of new challenges and restrictions.

We thought it would be the commercial driver that would encourage schools to open their facilities. We know they need money, and hire rates for those facilities can be quite valuable. Actually, what we have found, to our surprise, is that increasingly schools value being part of their community. They want to reach out to their community and play a more active part. We are finding that the pitch we need to make to schools to open their facilities is actually more in that space than it is in income generation. There is lots of innovative work going on in that space.

Lord Krebs: It seems to me—I am trying to be provocative—that, whenever we talk about activity, you conflate it with sport or leisure. Let me make the proposition that for most people the way to get them more active is to get them to walk to the shops, walk to work or cycle to places instead of taking the bus or driving.

All this talk about facilities to get people to be more active—sports centres and leisure centres—may be pointing in completely the wrong direction. Maybe the whole challenge is just to make it easier to move

around a town, or indeed in the country, by using your feet or riding a bike. What do you say to that?

Kirsty Cumming: I absolutely take your point, Lord Krebs. As I referred to earlier, we have moved away from the idea of driving people towards facilities to be active. It is much more about how they move around in their neighbourhood. There also has to be recognition that it comes back to the idea of fun and enjoyment, and a support network for people to want to remain physically active. We have members who run walking groups and jogging groups. There are also things such as allotments and gardening, which is a form of activity. We talk about physical activity in sport. Sport is a part of physical activity. Our members would very strongly go with that definition rather than the other way round. There is real recognition that—

Lord Krebs: I am sorry to interrupt, but I still think you are making the wrong assumption. I am saying that the way to get people physically active is to get them to walk to and from the shops. You say that, if they start that, they might want to join a walking group. I am saying that that is irrelevant. You do not need to join a walking group to be active. You just have to get out of your car, off your bum, and move around on foot or on a bike. For most people, that will be the way to increase the level of activity.

Kirsty Cumming: Absolutely. I take the points about Active Travel and the idea of 20-minute neighbourhoods, which was touched on earlier, and enabling people to walk to places. I think it comes back to the fact that a lot of people want the social aspects of movement and physical activity that they will not get through Active Travel. There are two different purposes in my mind. Active Travel absolutely has health benefits and gets people active, but in some of the social aspects and, in connection with isolation and loneliness, being part of something, physical activity in the community can support and help in a range of ways, from gardening and walking right through to pathways into sports.

Baroness Sater: Leisure centres are usually in the centre of their communities, which is very helpful with regard to all the issues around safety, and people can access them. With changing attitudes to the way people want to take their activities, and the different types of activities, do you think it is time for real innovation in our sports and leisure centres?

Kirsty Cumming: The idea of regeneration and innovation is absolutely where we need to go. We need to look at the regeneration of towns and the role of public leisure in regenerating communities and high streets. As has already been mentioned in this session, the use of empty retail spaces as community hubs and developing new and different activities in different spaces is absolutely the way forward.

Q23 **Lord Moynihan:** I want to explore the link between schools, local communities, local authorities and what you are doing at the moment with local club initiatives. There appears to us to be a wide range of

commitment by schools to engage in extracurricular sport, with extracurricular sports clubs and activities in schools.

How well do you think schools work with external sports providers, such as the three of you in your different ways, to signpost students and parents to activities run both inside and outside school hours? Connected to that, do you think that schools are clear about what their principal objectives should be in the context of sport, recreation and physical activity?

Lee Mason: Your question is right; there is a very mixed picture, not surprisingly, across schools. There are different levels of commitment to the agenda.

Through the primary PE and sport premium, we have seen a significant increase in the use of external providers in supporting extracurricular provision and, indeed, in PE and school sport. You question the quality of that, and I am sure it is mixed. One of the challenges we have had is that, despite several attempts, we have never managed to get a national kitemark or quality assurance for that provision so that we know and can guarantee its quality. That would be helpful.

There is scope for much more extracurricular provision in schools. The big suggestion that we have made, although it is not particularly from us—the former Children’s Commissioner made the suggestion to government and our whole sector is supportive of it—is that we find a way to move to an extended school day. A school day of 8 to 5 or 8 to 6 could become much more the norm. It seems to me that is a real win-win for everybody. It is obviously beneficial for working parents. It enables us to provide many more opportunities for children who otherwise would not have those opportunities. I believe that the sport and physical activity sector would respond very strongly to that and would fill that time with good-quality offers. Going back to my first point, I think a quality assurance mark would be warranted and would work in that context.

Lord Moynihan: What are the problems that you have come up against? You said that “not surprisingly” it was a very mixed picture. I am quite surprised that we have got to 2020 and it should be such a mixed picture. What can be done to address that? Is it a matter of establishing clear priority objectives for schools, and indeed for all the organisations represented here today, or is it more technical, such as insurance issues for schools, engaging with local communities and the costs of lighting and caretaking? What are the big issues? What are the hurdles? Are the objectives clear enough?

Lee Mason: All of the above, Lord Moynihan. At times, clearer direction from government would be helpful, and stronger accountability for what is expected. For example, as you know, PE is on the national curriculum; schools are expected to deliver the curriculum and report to parents on outcomes, but I know that is not always the case. It is about holding schools to account.

Fundamentally, it is about changing the culture in schools so that they see and value the importance of their children being active, and the contribution that makes to their educational outcomes and the wider outcomes to which schools contribute. Many schools get that and are totally committed, but others obviously have competing priorities and they do not always see the link.

Nigel could probably talk better about a project I know of in Yorkshire, which is trying to tackle the culture of leadership in schools and thinking about the whole school day. It is about how to build physical activity into the whole school day, from walking to school, as Lord Krebs was talking about, to PE in the national curriculum and the extracurricular provision, using every opportunity to help children to be active during the school day.

Nigel Harrison: In Yorkshire, my colleagues with expertise in the schools arena have created an active schools framework. Yes, it is another framework, but it sets out the facets that need to take place in school. You can have conversations with head teachers, asking whether physical activity is embedded in policy and, as Lee said, how well it is embedded in the curriculum and after the curriculum, and how well you work with outside agencies, staff training and so on. It is a framework.

We have started to use that, and to work with head teachers, supporting other head teachers, on how that framework can be embedded in particular schools. We are trying to get to a whole school approach, rather than just seeing it as an extracurricular school to club link. It is much broader than that; activity is embedded throughout. Walk to School and Active Travel to school are all embedded in the framework that is being worked on at the moment.

Lord Moynihan: If you had to summarise the outcomes you are seeking from that policy, what would you say?

Nigel Harrison: There are two things. There is the here and now of children being active. I was describing some of our data to Lord Krebs earlier. We know that children are more active at school than they are at weekends or in the evenings and school holidays. We have evidence of that, especially in some of our poorer areas. We know that schools are really important, so there is the outcome of being active at school.

At primary school, in the early years and all the way through, it is much more about building the capability of children and young people to be active for the rest of their life. It is building fundamental skills so that the choices are available for the rest of their life. It is getting down to basics, so that people can have balance, agility and co-ordination and can throw or catch a ball. It is important to get all of those in place at primary school level, where it will live with them for the rest of their life. If they cannot do that, it will be much more difficult to get them into physical activity and playing sport.

Schools have a crucial role to play. It is getting children active, and embedding skills and motivations at that level. Those are the outcomes that we are trying to achieve through that kind of framework.

Baroness Blower: I want to return to Lord Moynihan's list of things that are difficult in working with schools. I am sure you know that, if a school is a PFI build, it is inordinately expensive even for the school itself to hire it, let alone for anybody else to hire it. There is a fundamentally big problem with the fact that we have such a patchwork in the way schools are organised. If we are to overlay an extended day on to that, we have to make sure that the local authority is central to that and is willing and able to work with all the other types of school in the geographical area.

There is a huge issue about the fact that schools have been allowed to sell off green space and their playing fields. It seems to me that, underlying the list of things that Lord Moynihan went through, there are any number of huge difficulties in getting schools properly involved. That is not to say that there are not some extremely good examples—for example, the notion of the walking bus.

The Chair: I am going to stop you there because we want to hear from our witnesses, and we are running out of time very quickly.

Lord Addington: Do you have a model that is successful in keeping people involved with the outside providers when they leave the school? This has been a key problem. School unites and organises, which is why kids are easy. When they get to X age—16, 18, 21—they drop out. Do you have a good example of where that is not happening, outside the school sports partnerships?

Lee Mason: Over recent years, the partnerships, with Sport England, have been running a programme called satellite clubs. We create a very deliberate link between a community provider and a school, and arrange high-quality clubs, often first on the school site, in order to engage young people, moving gradually on to community sites as the programme runs through. That has been hugely successful.

It has been increasingly targeted at the least active young people and those who need most support. It broadens the range of activities and opportunities that young people are presented with, so that, hopefully, more of them find something that is attractive to them and that they will stick with. People move from one activity to another, and that is fine. Nobody needs to stick with the same sport or activity for their whole life.

Q24 **Lord Snape:** This is possibly a question for the three of you on diversity and inclusion. What role can Active Partnerships, charities, social enterprises and community leisure trusts play in supporting diversity and inclusion in the sport and recreation workforce and among participants?

Kirsty Cumming: Diversity and inclusion is quite a hot topic among our membership. From a participant's perspective, there is a huge amount of work going on across the country to provide bespoke activities for different community groups to recognise some of the challenges and

barriers. It is about liaising with those different groups to create activities and opportunities that are appropriate and accessible.

There have been a number of strong partnerships with other organisations and charities specialising in different areas, to understand how community leisure can support some of those groups and offer opportunities, whether in facilities or another format. We have seen a real drive, and I guess a core focus for our members is trying to provide opportunities that are inclusive and accessible for all. That is at the heart of what they do.

It is probably recognised that community leisure is perhaps not the strongest in having a diverse workforce. There are a number of challenges. It is traditionally a more low-paid sector. Career opportunities in sport and leisure are perhaps not always valued in the same way as in other sectors. The chartered institutes have done a great deal of work on professionalising and driving the value of the workforce, which, hopefully, will attract a wider range of people and build pathways to careers.

There is still work to be done. A lot of it comes back to the point about people in communities seeing people they can relate to in those organisations, in their workforce and in their governance. Without that, we will still have a barrier to people identifying with the organisations in that sense.

Nigel Harrison: First and foremost for us as an organisation is getting our own house in order and building some leadership. We need to listen, learn and act ourselves around diversity and inclusion. Then we can show some kind of outreach and leadership to others. We need to set a good example. We have done a heck of a lot of learning over the last 12 months, as you can imagine, and we have really delved into our policies and procedures to make sure that we have not embedded anything that is discriminatory. That is the first thing.

The second thing we need to do is to show some leadership and promote a more diverse leadership workforce. There are people around, and we need to make sure we promote them. We need to make sure that disabled people, people with long-term conditions, black people and people from ethnic minority communities and so on are up front and are leading activities and are the leading voice. We need to support that as best we can.

We need to challenge other organisations and ourselves constantly, and put all our decision-making through the filter of diversity and inclusion as much as we possibly can. We have a huge role to play, as all organisations do. We do a lot of targeted work in programmes, as Kirsty was saying, so we can target participant-wise, but I am particularly concerned about our workforce. We have to work hard at getting the workforce in our sector far more diverse than it is currently.

Lee Mason: I was going to make both of those points. The only other point I would add, and that I would encourage you to look at, is our

experience with Sport England over the last six months with the Tackling Inequalities fund. It was a way of working that came about as a result of Sport England's response to Covid. At Sport England, I think they realised that their emergency funding was not getting to the communities that might most need it and that they most wanted to reach.

It is a fundamentally different way of working, whereby Sport England is to some extent devolving some of its funding responsibility closer to communities, using not only Active Partnerships but other trusted partners. Rather than a centralised solution from London, it uses partners who can connect more directly to the communities and networks we are trying to reach. I encourage the Committee to have a look at that as a relatively new model and way of working. It has come as a result of Covid, but perhaps we should stick with it moving forward.

The Chair: Thank you very much indeed.

Q25 **Lord Hayward:** I just make the observation about the previous questions that this Committee is not exactly diverse when one is asking other people how they are going to achieve diversity, although fortunately we have reasonable representation in gender.

In relation to recommendations that you would like the Committee to make to the Government but concentrating on informal activities rather than sport and recreation, we are keen to find ways of getting people informally active, as you will have gathered from the observations that people have been making. Do you have any initial thoughts, and if we run out of time could you please write to us with further thoughts and observations?

Lee Mason: My initial response and thought would be that we need to influence planners, transport agencies and housing agencies in order to facilitate some of what you describe, and not necessarily DCMS, which we typically work with in government and look to for some of the answers and structures. We need help and support from many other departments across government.

We recently responded to the proposed changes to the planning framework, which we feel could have the unintended consequences of making informal recreation and physical activity more difficult, rather than easier. It is that kind of thing. How do we hard-wire thinking about how we enable people to be active into all the policies across government departments such as transport, travel, planning and so on?

Nigel Harrison: Thank you for the invitation; we will write in. I was going to say embedding it across government as well. In particular, it is not necessarily trying to find solutions at national level but appreciating that a lot of solutions are at local and community level. It is trying to line up how we can make things easier at community level and listening to that level. As Lee said, it is completely cross-cutting across all the agendas.

Kirsty Cumming: I agree with both Lee and Nigel about the cross-cutting approach. From a community leisure perspective, I would add that it is about our members being trusted to deliver on behalf of their local authorities. When local authorities are commissioning services, we need to look at a requirement for the contractors—trusts in our example—to offer affordable and inclusive programmes. There should be a requirement for them to work within communities to join up and strengthen the offer for residents so that it is embedded at local level.

The Chair: I am struck by the fact that none of you talked about any sort of reorganisation of the way in which the Government allocate resources and responsibilities through the system. You talk mainly about government departments, and I think the Committee would totally agree with you there. Is there another recommendation you could make about how we could organise things more smoothly than they are at the present?

Lee Mason: I am starting to see more place-based thinking from the Government, which should be encouraged. Rather than landing lots of initiatives, we should be starting with place and thinking about what the needs of that place are and, where possible, devolving funding and responsibility to localities to work out solutions that, as Nigel says, can often be found at local level. Wherever possible, we should think in a place-based way. We should start with the place and the needs of individual places, rather than thinking top-down as regards solutions at government level.

The Chair: Lord Hayward, I think you have a declaration of interest.

Lord Hayward: My apologies, Lord Chairman. I want to add a declaration, in that previously I was an adviser to Kirsty's organisation in Community Leisure. I believe the period was from 2011 to 2016. I will confirm the date separately. I had not realised that we needed to go back that far, so I confirm that declaration.

The Chair: Thank you very much indeed. It is always good to get a Committee member to apologise at the end. I thank the Committee for some splendid questioning this afternoon.

I particularly thank our three witnesses, who have been very frank and straight with us. You have promised us a lot of other information, which we shall be very happy to have. Thank you very much for coming Kirsty, Nigel and Lee, and a very happy Christmas to all three of you.