



Select Committee on a National Plan for Sport and Recreation

Corrected oral evidence: National plan for sport and recreation

Wednesday 3 March 2021

6 pm

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

Evidence Session No. 14

Virtual Proceeding

Questions 106 - 117

Witnesses

I: Hon Grant Robertson, Deputy Prime Minister of New Zealand, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister of Finance; Dr Alice Hume, Policy Manager, Sport New Zealand.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

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

Examination of witnesses

Hon Grant Robertson and Dr Alice Hume.

Q106 The Chair: Good evening, or good morning, and welcome to our session of the House of Lords Select Committee on a National Plan for Sport and Recreation. A very warm welcome to the Honourable Grant Robertson, Deputy Prime Minister of New Zealand, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister of Finance, and to Dr Alice Hume, the policy manager for Sport New Zealand. We are very grateful to you both for joining us. You are very welcome indeed. Being there at 7 am is something that we all know about, because we are doing a lot of home schooling so we are up very early these days.

A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the committee's website. You will have an opportunity to make any corrections, if you feel any need to be made, but I hope that we will have a strong interchange during the next hour and thanks again very much for joining us.

Could I start with you, Minister? In your budget speech in 2019, you said that New Zealanders' values were not being valued by the Government and that therefore they were not being measured and things were not getting done. On the back of that speech, you introduced a well-being budget, measuring and focusing on the things that New Zealand valued. Could you explain to our committee what a well-being budget is and what impact this approach had, particularly on funding from the Treasury and the delivery of sport and recreation?

Grant Robertson: Good morning from tomorrow. It is terrific to see all of you there this morning and I very much welcome this opportunity. I note a couple of people I have met in the past, Lord Knight and Lord Hayward, and I bring greetings to you from those you know on this side of the world.

The well-being budget essentially is a way of deriving our Government's annual budget using a set of evidence-based indicators and, at the other end of the process, measuring our success against a wider range of indicators than you would normally expect. For example, we are all very familiar with the indicator of GDP, gross domestic product, and that is a useful indicator of activity in the economy, but we do not believe it is a sufficient indicator of the overall success or otherwise of our society.

Using a framework called the living standards framework, which has been derived by our Treasury and is based loosely on the OECD's Better Life Index, we are measuring our success and are using this to help decide our priorities across four capitals: financial capital—the more traditional things we know about, such as the resources and the assets that a country has; human capital—our people and how healthy are we, how educated are we, how we feel about the world around us; natural capital—the environment and the way in which we protect and support it; and social capital, which is essentially the connections between each other, the trust we have in communities and each other as well as the

trust we have in government, and how strong those communities are. We developed a suite of indicators across those four capitals, looked at where New Zealand was against them, and used that evidence to decide what to invest in.

I could speak for a long time on those, but I will give just one example that is relevant to the sport and recreation area. Using that framework, the evidence came through to us that New Zealanders' mental health was starting to lag behind the indicators that we would expect, and we had some very poor indicators on things like youth suicide and so on. We invested very heavily in mental health in that first well-being budget, because the evidence told us that it would be an area where there would be a lot of work that we could usefully do.

We established a set of five priorities for the budget and essentially said to all government departments and Ministers, "You need to be working in these areas". Those areas were things like mental health, and, looking at Lord Knight, the future of work. Another was how we are adjusting to climate change and another was how our indigenous population, the Māori population, was doing. We had these five priorities and we set our budget against them. Now we are assessing our success against that wider set of indicators rather than just an indicator like GDP.

The budget itself, when we came to put it together, very necessarily breaks down the silos of government, because you cannot address those big-picture topics without having government agencies working together. In sport and recreation, that was especially the case, because we wanted to have budget initiatives that showed the impact of positive involvement in sport and recreation, but to do that we needed to work with other agencies.

I was very proud of an initiative in that budget called the Healthy Active Learning initiative, which was brought together by Sport New Zealand with the Ministries of Health and Education. It is a combined programme, delivered in schools, where students are learning about nutrition and about the value of play and active recreation at the same time. It helps their learning, their mental health and their physical health. That is a perfect example of a well-being approach. It may or may not help that the Minister of Finance, the equivalent of the Chancellor in your system, is also the Minister for Sport and Recreation, but that project was funded in the budget and I think it made for a very good initiative.

For want of a better phrase, it is a more holistic, more long-term approach where we bring together different government agencies to work towards a set of evidence-based priorities that are about people's overall well-being.

The Chair: Is it basically the Treasury that is doing the co-ordination work or a different organisation? I think we have the same aspirations but find it difficult to get different departments to work together because they have siloed budgets.

Grant Robertson: Yes, and that remains a challenge for us as well. In essence, the answer to your question is, yes, it is Treasury. If we are getting into the nitty-gritty of it, under each of our five priority areas I have brought together groups of Ministers and charged them with the responsibility of coming up with a single package within each priority area. We have half a dozen different lead agencies and Ministers who are coming together to bring a single set of budget proposals. That forces the Ministers to talk to one another about what they might be able to get.

It is not easy. I could do a whole session on this as Finance Minister, because one of the things that we have had to work very hard on is changes to the legislation that governs putting our budgets together. Our Public Finance Act in many ways reinforces those silos, and we have made changes to it already to ensure that I, as the Minister, have to report on the wider well-being objectives. We are now moving towards further change in that area, which we will be piloting in the next budget, to reduce the number of appropriations we have into clusters so that people are actively encouraged to work together. Otherwise, you are absolutely right: people will simply revert to siloing. I have found, as Minister for Finance, that the lever of the budget is a very useful one to help focus people's minds if we say, "You'll only be funded if you're working in these priority areas and across agencies".

It is work in progress, but I think it is ultimately the right outcome, because very few of the major challenges in our society will be solved by one government agency or one department alone.

The Chair: Did this idea come out of your thinking and your colleagues' thinking, or did you see it elsewhere in the world?

Grant Robertson: The living standards framework itself was developed by our Treasury before we came into government, but not a lot had been done with it by our predecessors. There are examples of it around the world, but we believe we are the first country to have an end-to-end well-being budget, using this framework both to decide our priorities and to measure our success.

I hesitate to say it, but the Scottish Government do some work in a similar space, as do Italy, Spain and Costa Rica. The United Arab Emirates do a lot of it; I think well-being there is possibly slightly easier to achieve with their revenue base. There are other countries around the world doing similar work. I gave a talk on this topic at LSE when I was there a few years ago. There are some wonderful thinkers on this topic inside the UK system.

Q107 **Lord Knight of Weymouth:** Minister, it is great to see you again. I want to follow on from what the Chair was just asking you about. From your own experience, and the experience, which you looked at, of those who have done similar but perhaps not as extensive work on a single well-being budget approach, does there end up being a trade-off between the economy and the jobs and some of the other aspects of well-being, or do you end up getting a win-win out of this because, in the end, wider social

and health well-being and so on help the economy and jobs?

Grant Robertson: That is certainly the hypothesis that we are testing. There are always trade-offs in any budget, and this approach does not eliminate the need for trade-offs. There is a limited amount of money available and we have to make choices and decisions. However, what we are trying to show—the evidence will come as the indicators I mentioned improve—is that you very much have to have a wider view. People themselves do not operate in silos. People's lives are interconnected.

I will draw an example from the response to Covid-19. We have taken what we believe to be a well-being approach in that we believe that we can create the most success for our economy by having a strong health response to Covid-19. To me, that is a manifestation of the well-being approach, because it says that we have to look beyond a narrow view of success to keeping people healthy, to keeping people alive and well. We think there are a lot of synergies, but ultimately we still have to make decisions about the relative merits of proposals. Simply speaking, this gives us a framework to do that; we are assessing those proposals against a much wider set of indicators.

From the sport and recreation perspective, I mentioned the Healthy Active Learning initiative. We had very strong evidence that students who were more physically active and fit learned better. We also had evidence that their mental health and physical health were very much interconnected and that the school environment was one in which all those messages could be put across. That is the example for us.

That programme is going tremendously well. I recently spoke to the group of educators who lead the programme in different parts of the country. They told stories of the outcomes, the change they were seeing not just in the lives of the children but in the lives of the parents, because the parents became more connected to what the children were doing and began to eat more healthily and to think more about their own physical health, too. For me, it is a bit of a no-brainer, but we are still forming the evidence base to meet the assumption.

Q108 **Baroness Blower:** Is the Healthy Active Learning programme the Minister just talked about pre-primary, primary and post-primary programme? When does it start?

Grant Robertson: It starts in what we call our primary schools. I will be careful about definitions here. It is targeted at children aged from five to 12 or 13.

Q109 **Baroness Brady:** Thank you for telling us about your indicators, which become your priorities. I am interested to know how you measure success in the delivery of sport and recreation, and what happens if your expected performance, the outcomes, are underwhelming.

Grant Robertson: Yes, a very good question. One piece of context is the way we organise ourselves for sport and recreation in New Zealand. Dr Hume, who is with us on the call, works for an organisation called Sport

New Zealand, which in our system is called a Crown entity. That means that, as the Minister, I appoint the board that runs Sport New Zealand but I am not directly involved in its operations. In fact, by a piece of legislation called the Sport and Recreation Act I am prevented from making individual decisions about the funding of sport. My job is to set the framework, the criteria, the strategy with the board and the board to administer it. I am still responsible for answering questions about it in the House and so on, so I do not get away with it, but it is an arm's-length situation, which is seen in New Zealand as important, and not too politicised an area. That is by way of background.

On the specifics of your question, we probably have two different sets of indicators. The first is for our high-performance sport. We have indicators for the athletes who are operating at Olympic level, Commonwealth Games level, and World Championship level where we measure success against medal performance and how we track. That has a particular follow-through to the funding for future high-performance activity. How you perform at the peak events helps to dictate some of the funding. We have recently altered the strategy for high-performance sport to be able to draw in some sports where we are perhaps never going to win an Olympic medal but where there is a great deal of interest in New Zealand or where it is useful and helpful in inspiring people. The fastest growing sport in New Zealand schools is basketball, but New Zealand is not in a position at the moment where it is winning medals. We have tweaked the funding criteria a little to enable those sports to get some support into the future.

We also have indicators of success at the community sport level, and there our funding is devolved. We do a range of surveys, and one that I particularly commend to those who are interested—it is all online—is the Value of Sport survey. From that we can understand how New Zealanders feel about being physically active, and this comes back to the well-being approach. Does it help them to have a sense of belonging and community? Does it help with their individual health? Those indicators are strong, but we can see trends in them. We can certainly see different age groups having different levels of interest or feelings of well-being from sport. In turn, we use that to help to support a funding strategy that is delivered through our funding partners, which tend to be national sporting and recreation organisations such as Netball New Zealand, New Zealand Rugby or Cricket, or many other sports.

A critical element of our network is the Regional Sports Trusts. There are about 12 of them around the country, and they deliver, with a series of individual partners at local level, a huge range of sport and recreation opportunities. They have performance targets in agreements between Sport New Zealand and them, as do the national sporting organisations for the funding that we give them. Each of them has a funding contract that is negotiated on a three-year cycle, and different types of funding emerge through that time. They get that, but there are also indicators of success for them. We have made quite a lot of changes over the last three years to elements of them, which I am sure will come up in later

questions. When I became the Minister, I developed a strategy for women and girls in sport and one for sport for people with disabilities. Now we have a set of indicators of the success of those which Sport New Zealand is accountable for, but it in turn works with other organisations to help deliver them.

Baroness Brady: Who steps in when they are not delivering against the indicators or the measures that they said they are going to deliver against?

Grant Robertson: One of the roles of Sport New Zealand is the ability to measure the indicators. I see that Dr Hume has appeared, and she may wish to comment on this, but Sport New Zealand staff will report to the board the on progress of all the funded organisations on their indicators. The board and Sport New Zealand will, from time to time, take the opportunity to talk to the organisations that they support and fund about how they are doing against their indicators. We have a very transparent reporting regime, so people will be able to see that. Alice, do you want to say something about that?

Dr Alice Hume: Thank you, Minister. Our funding is increasingly aligned to our strategic outcomes and priorities, and we meet regularly with the partners that we fund in order to understand how they are delivering against the outcomes in their own local environments. That can vary quite considerably if you are in a rural or urban area and what the demographics of the area are. We make sure that we understand how our partners are understanding the population that they are servicing and their needs, and how they are tailoring their offering to meet those needs.

Baroness Brady: One final question so that I am absolutely clear. Is their funding reduced if they are not delivering against their performance indicators?

Grant Robertson: Not necessarily. We do it on a three-yearly cycle, but it can have a major impact on what happens in the next funding round.

Q110 **Lord Hayward:** Minister, thank you for the message, and can you reciprocate back, please?

Following on from a comment you made earlier, you have obviously looked at a number of countries around the world and what they do and tried to learn from them and apply that. Given that you have incredibly high participation rates, relatively speaking, do you look at our country and think, "Why on earth do they not do X?" What is X or Y?

Grant Robertson: I am always very wary as a politician about telling others how to do their jobs.

Lord Hayward: Do not be polite, just tell us.

Grant Robertson: Perhaps I will frame it another way and talk about some of the things that I think are driving success in those participation

rates. By the way, I should say that people in New Zealand are concerned that young people in particular are not participating in sport and recreation as they once did, so I certainly do not want to claim any kind of perfection here.

One of the really important things that has driven us is drilling down into some of the barriers that people have to participation and how can we address them. It might be access to transport and the ability to get to an opportunity for sport or recreation. It can be cost barriers, such as fees to be paid and so on. Being able to be very clear about what the barriers are gives you the opportunity and ability to understand that.

Another thing is understanding the regional differences, which every country experiences, and I am sure you do in the UK. Alice briefly mentioned some of those. An appropriate strategy in a large city area may not be the right strategy in another area. We have adopted quite flexible approaches to the way our Regional Sports Trusts in particular do their job, giving those organisations some agency and freedom to make decisions that work well for them locally within the confines of a funding agreement and so on. It is about being able to be very clear about different groups that you want to be involved in. The participation rates of our Māori and Pacific Island communities in New Zealand have moved up and down a bit over the years. Having strategies that are dedicated to those groups helps us to achieve better in those areas.

Q111 The Chair: Minister, before we move on I will go back to Baroness Brady's question. One of the areas in 2018 that your Government identified was the issue of obesity, particularly in children. The latest figures for obesity are roughly the same as Britain's, and they have not changed since you recognised this as a major problem in 2018. Does that not let the health department off the hook and say that it is the sport and recreation that is not working? What do you do at that point?

Grant Robertson: No, I do not think that it does. I agree with you that the change we are looking for will take some time. Some of that is data collection, I might add. There is always a lag on that, but this will be a long-term change. At the risk of repeating myself, it is one of the reasons for getting the Healthy Active Learning programme, that I mentioned. That is a shared programme between our Ministry of Health, our Ministry of Education, and Sport New Zealand. All three of them are jointly accountable for it. Sport New Zealand has driven a lot of the work, but it means that if you put it all the way back to Ministers, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Education are responsible for the delivery of the framework just as much as I am. I think the approach we are taking creates more shared accountability.

It surprised me when we came to put this programme together that Sport New Zealand had had very few opportunities over the years to sit down with health and education officials to create a joint programme like this. Part of that is the structure of our system whereby Sport New Zealand is a Crown entity and those agencies are core government departments, but this is the whole problem of breaking down silos. It has to happen. We

will not change obesity rates if we consider it to be one agency's issue or problem to deal with. I hope the initiative we have taken will start to turn around some of the numbers that you mentioned.

Q112 Baroness Morris of Yardley: Good morning, Minister and Dr Hume. You started to talk about the question that I was going to ask, but I will carry it on. It is about drop-out rates. When you look at the statistics, you really have high participation rates in young children, but it looks as though you have the drop-out rate that we have in the early teenage years and beyond. Could you say a bit more about that? You have had a lot of initiatives over the last years. How effective do you think they have been in addressing the drop-out rate?

Grant Robertson: Thank you very much for question. I will make a few comments and ask Dr Hume to pick up on them, particularly on the latter part of your question. We recognise this, and the Sport New Zealand board recognises it, and it has led to a change in the focus for our 2020-24 strategy being specifically about young people. The phrasing that we use, using our indigenous Māori language, is tamariki and rangatahi, which means children and young people. That is now the focus to improve activity levels for children aged five to 11 and reduce the drop-off for young people aged 12 to 18.

As a first step, we have made it a core goal in our strategy, and that drives much of what we are doing. In turn, it led to a number of initiatives that might be seen from a sporting perspective to be slightly counterintuitive in some senses. One is the Balance is Better scheme, where the major sporting codes came together to create a programme with the message to young people that getting involved and being active with your friends is more important than specialising very early in a sport.

One of the things we were seeing in drop-off rates is that people did not want to participate because they were not going to make the rep team or get to a particular point, so they fell away from an individual sport. Those sports joined with us to say, "Get involved in as many different things as you can when you are young. There is plenty of time to specialise later on. Focus on what you enjoy about it". We found from our research that more often than not that was just being with friends and being active with friends.

Deciding to have a programme like that is controversial in some ways, because some people view it as shifting away from a focus on winning to a focus on participation, but the sports themselves have said to us, "We want people to build a strong base of their love of and interest in sport, and they will eventually become high-performance athletes, but they will have a much broader base and we won't lose so many of them in the drop-off rates". That programme is relatively new and I do not think it has had an assessment yet, but the anecdotal feedback we have had on it has been extremely strong. The strategy I mentioned is helping to drive some specific funding decisions that we have made.

Another recent programme is called Tū Manawa Active, which is quite a large programme from our system. It is about £35 million. That is about community programmes specifically designed to support people to get active, not just through traditional sport and recreation but more generally through play. We are using the network of regional sports trusts to engage very directly with young people and organisations that support young people. Some of the drop-off rate relates particularly to the changes that young people are going through and which sometimes makes them less inclined to want to involve themselves. In the Women and Girls strategy in particular we have tried to recognise that and to break down barriers and have programmes that are easy to access and that will cause some of those issues. Alice, do you want to throw anything else in there?

Dr Alice Hume: I will add to what you said about understanding what we call the domains that we are operating in: children and young people across play, what we would call active recreation such as non-organised activities and sport, sport in the school environment, and being clear about the barriers that we have identified and targeting our progress and our funding towards overcoming those barriers. As the Minister said, we have a good range of initiatives now across the four domains. We are very confident that we are engaging with children and young people and their parents and the other influences in their lives to make sure that we understand the environment that we are operating in.

Baroness Morris of Yardley: If you are right and it is this balance that is important—you have already said, Minister, that some people want the elite sport and they want to be spotting the talent early on—do you think that will influence what you do on elite sport as well, or do you think you can run both together at the same time throughout the childhood and teenage years?

Grant Robertson: This is very much a work in progress, so I am not going to claim to know the precise answer to that question. We built the Balance is Better programme around five very large sports that are very high profile and had very high-profile people, high-performance athletes from those sports, front the campaign.

We think that ultimately the two go together: we do not build the champions of the future without a very strong base. If young people are not enjoying the sport and the recreation they are doing, they will not stick at it. Sometimes the enjoyment is at a very young age. We found that the pressure that is put on by the high-performance programmes limits the enjoyment.

As I said, it is quite disputed ground. Like a lot of sports, rugby is a very high-profile sport in New Zealand and one I have been involved in in the past, and the academy programmes are still very strong. It is sometimes very disappointing to me to see the scouts from those academies talking to people at age 11 and 12. We want our young people to have a bit more time and space to develop, but the professional sporting era sees people focused at that early stage.

We are trying to get a bit more balance in, and we think that the evidence that we have seen, and certainly the support we have for the programme, shows that people understand that the time for that focusing and elite athlete participation emerges through your teenage years and will become very significant in later years. You will specialise at that point, because you have to be able to succeed in the sport.

I think the two go together, but we will not get the strong base we need for elite success if we do not keep the enjoyment high but also recognise that the health benefit may not necessarily come from an organised sport. It might come from participation in an active recreation activity in the initial period. I am very happy for you to look at how this programme goes because, as I say, it is not without its critics.

Q113 Baroness Morris of Yardley: We will, because it is certainly a challenge that we face. This question is a bit sideways on, but it may be related. We understand that you are trying to use people from outside schools to teach the PE curriculum in schools. I am assuming that they are people who are experts in sport and leisure but may not be trained teachers. Is that connected with the drop-out rate? Could you say a little bit about why you have taken that course and how you feel it is going?

Grant Robertson: It is interesting for us that the programme I mentioned before, Healthy Active Learning, is starting to move away a little bit from the outsourcing of the programme, partly because the analysis that we did was that some of our use of outside people was creating quite a confusing environment for schools and teachers. They did not see that as their job or their role, which meant that our curriculum was not always being taught the way we wanted it to be. That had a compounding effect on teachers' confidence to be able to teach elements of physical education and so on, and it limited their development and sometimes saw them drop out from extracurricular activities that they were supporting.

The Healthy Active Learning programme is in part based on outside experts supporting teachers to be better deliverers of physical education. A large number of the staff who have been employed under the Healthy Active Learning initiative are either former teachers or recently trained teachers. We are beginning to bring that back in a little bit. There will always be a place for external providers and specialists and people who can come in and help but, to put it into a catch phrase, I think that a train-the-trainers approach is probably better than outsourcing it completely.

Baroness Morris of Yardley: Thank you both very much.

Q114 Baroness Grey-Thompson: Good morning, Minister and Dr Hume. I have quite a broad question about diversity and inclusion. It is about the challenges that you face in improving diversity and inclusion, looking at participation rates among underrepresented groups but also widening that out into coaching opportunities and then diversity on sports governing bodies.

Grant Robertson: Thank you for the question. When I became the Minister, I asked Sport New Zealand at a strategic level to have a much greater focus on this area particularly around women and girls. We released that strategy in about October 2018. We were very keen to make sure that it was more than just words, because that can be the risk in any programme that targets diversity issues. It is quite easy to put a lot of words on a piece of paper but harder sometimes to see the outcome. That strategy has 24 commitments for Sport New Zealand, which are essentially about three themes: leadership, participation, and the visibility, or valuing, of women and girls in sport.

To give an example, in the leadership area we have imposed a diversity target for the governing boards of our funded sports. I know that targets are very controversial in these areas, but we were not seeing the change that we wanted. We have said that at least 40% of members of boards that get more than \$50,000 a year of our funding have to be female, which is a big change in some of our sports. We have not seen that.

Coming back to an earlier question, I think from Baroness Brady, we have made clear that there will be a consequence for funding if those bodies do not meet the targets. Without wanting to sound patronising, it is interesting to talk to those involved in the sports who have lifted the number of women involved in governance and say that they are making better decisions. That does not surprise me, but clearly it has been a surprise to one or two of the people involved and it is because we are getting a much wider diversity of people at the board table.

Beyond that, the programme focuses on women in other leadership positions and a high-performance pilot. We have far fewer female coaches in our sporting system and we are concerned about that. We are particularly concerned to make sure that there are female coaches for female athletes, and we have invested significant funding there. There are a couple of interesting funds that we have created particularly for young women with regard to activations. They range from getting people from backgrounds and communities that are traditionally less involved in sport. There are those from the Asian community in our largest city who have been less involved, and we have specific programmes to support that, all the way through to programmes that involve our Girl Guide movement and so on.

It is a strategy that I think will work, but I have laboured over some of the detail because we have very specific initiatives with very specific outcomes that we are aiming for. Alice, would you like to add to that?

Dr Alice Hume: As you point out, this is one area on which we have placed a significant amount of emphasis and been very direct with our partners about what the consequences will be if they are not meeting some of them. But that goes hand in hand with increased targeted investment, and we are seeing a great level of collaboration and engagement and some really innovative programme ideas coming through that we are very pleased to have the opportunity to fund, such as girls-only skate programmes. New Zealand Cricket has a programme

called Yeah! Girls, which has been very successful, particularly this last season, in engaging girls in a much more open way to the traditional way in which cricket was delivered. It is focused on having fun and participating and then builds up skills in the process of that.

We are looking to highlight the benefits that we are seeing from those programmes and trying to inspire our other partners to think in a similar manner to engage with young people in those communities about what they would like to do rather than what we might think they want to do, which is what has happened in the past.

Grant Robertson: I will mention briefly that the third part of the strategy is valuing and visibility. There was a beautiful moment on our equivalent of BBC One sports news recently when a male New Zealand cricketer in a T20 game had scored at a strike rate of around 200 in an innings. Some young boys were being interviewed on the side of the field and they were asked what they thought of this. One of them said, "It's pretty cool, but it's not as good as Sophie Devine". Sophie Devine is the captain of the New Zealand women's cricket team. That young man knew about that, because this year we have had much more coverage of our women cricketers. It really is about the point that if you can see it, you can be it. For young girls and young boys that is an enormously important and significant thing. I am very pleased that we have put the emphasis on this.

It is not the only part of our diversity strategy. We also have a strategy, as I mentioned earlier, for disability in particular and wider inclusion for the rainbow communities and so on. It is so important that we do not assume that one size fits all. I know that no one on the call thinks that, but it is incumbent on us to have strategies that recognise that.

Q115 The Chair: Minister, before we leave this section, we have had major issues in the UK over safeguarding and duty of care of our athletes, of our children and particularly of our young elite athletes. Have you had those problems, and what have you done as part of this overall strategy to ensure that that gets looked at and dealt with properly?

Grant Robertson: That is a very good question and, yes, we have had those issues and we continue to have them. We have a number of sports where concerns have been raised about the well-being of athletes within them. We have seen that play out very publicly, largely at a high-performance level, unfortunately, in a number of sports. Sport New Zealand undertook a very comprehensive integrity review that ran the full gamut from the health and well-being of our athletes in programmes all the way through to sports betting, raising questions like how much television coverage there should be of secondary-school sport, because that puts a lot of pressure on people. We had a very comprehensive review and the outcomes of that are now beginning to be implemented.

Some examples of what we have done include: the creation of an independent complaints mechanism that can be lifted out from individual sports and people can feel confident that if they have issues or

complaints they have somewhere to take them; access to a mediation service, which again is independent so that those issues can be taken forward; and various codes that will emerge from that, down to simple things—sometimes they are not simple—like advertising and campaigns about how parents should behave on the sidelines at sport. We know that that has been an issue in the way this works and in trying to root out bullying and intimidation in sport. I think it is a problem worldwide, and we have undertaken this review and are now in the process of implementing it.

The issues have arisen in a number of sports where there are female athletes in a high-performance environment. That is a specific issue that relates to the strategy that we have just been talking about and to making sure that those environments are safe and constructive for the athletes. There will always be pressure in the high-performance world. It is how it is managed and not added to in interactions between the athletes and their coaches or the administrators.

It is very much part of our thinking, and we have drawn on expertise from offshore as well. We do not feel that we have all the answers to this. It is a global issue, but we must create environments that are not only safe but the best environment for success. If people do not feel safe, they will not succeed either.

Q116 Lord Knight of Weymouth: Before we move off diversity and inclusion, a lot of the discussion so far has been about sport, understandably, but less so about other forms of recreation that mean that people are doing physical activity, which is obviously important for well-being. I am particularly interested in how we make it more inclusive for people with disadvantages and people from ethnic minorities. To help us, what is your thinking on the blockages, the role of sport or alternative approaches using other forms of recreation?

Grant Robertson: We have an increasingly diverse population in New Zealand, as the UK does, and we need to make sure that the starting point is not that a single model that is somehow tweaked will work for everybody. You have to build the model with the community. There has been a big shift and a change in the thinking, which we mentioned briefly when we talked about the women and girls strategy and said, “Let’s talk to the people we want to be more active about what will help them”.

I mentioned our largest city in Auckland, where there is a growing Asian community, and working with those communities on developing a strategy and understanding the barriers. The barriers might be that playing a particular sport requires you to wear a particular uniform that is not culturally appropriate. Let us talk about how that can be changed so that that person feels that they can participate.

Equally, it is about understanding, as you pointed out, that organised sport will not necessarily be the way people get active and fit and healthy. That is a massive challenge to those of us who have grown up in a world where we were used to playing organised sports in a very

particular way. The inclusion in our strategy of the word “play” is very important. The strategy is about play, active recreation and sport, and that is based on expert advice about what brings people into a world where they are more physically active and healthy. It starts with play—little kids learning to play with one another and all the skills, motor skills, neurological changes and so on that are there.

That was another quite significant shift for people, who perhaps had a very traditional idea of what sport was—starting to understand that if you want people to stay involved and people from different backgrounds to be involved, you have to look at it as a spectrum on which people will intersect at different times in their lives. We all know this, because as adults we end up doing it. I do not play rugby any more, because I do not want to get hurt any more. I did not like waking up on Sunday morning not being able to walk, and in a way we move back to that. I am more likely to go for a walk now. If you were to ask 21 year-old Grant if he enjoyed walking, he would say, “No, not particularly. I’d like to go out and play squash or cricket or rugby or something”. We have to understand that in your life your journey will ebb and flow and different types of people will be more comfortable interacting in different ways. If I could have one thing for you to take away, it is broadening our minds to think about play, active recreation and sport.

Q117 Lord Addington: Hello, Minister and Dr Hume. I cannot resist saying as an aside that your parliamentary rugby team has been teaching me that my days of competitive play over nearly 20 years now are probably getting smaller and smaller.

What lessons would you recommend that New Zealand teaches to the UK? Another little aside here is about the cultural shift. In things like education we have had a movement away not just from sport but from things like music towards the three Rs, and towards being prejudiced against them, saying, “You have to concentrate on core activities”. How did you get the buy-in to that happening, which is clearly at the back of a lot of what you say? The same could be said of types of health delivery. It is a big question for the remaining 10 minutes, but have a go.

Grant Robertson: I am very happy to, because it is a very useful area. This will be the most political I will get in the next while, or in this whole session, I imagine. We had a period in our education system—I might even have talked to Jim about this when I was in the UK a few years ago—when the previous Government, not the Government I am part of, drew us back in our education system to the core areas of literacy and numeracy. Those are obviously hugely important building blocks for people’s lives, but we had a system called national standards that created a “teaching to the test” style phenomenon in schools, and it became very narrow.

This is not really about sport per se, but what we have learned, through the advice of experts and evidence, is that people can learn literacy and numeracy through music or sport and recreation. Having that wider view about the way people learn and understand gives you a much richer

curriculum, and we have refocused that. We are very proud of our curriculum. We think it is a very strong curriculum, but it is very broadly based on competencies and attributes rather than necessarily some of those very detailed matters.

That in turn flows through to what we expect of our teachers and what happens in the schools, and to the place of something like sport and recreation. We are giving it a strong place, because we think it is quite an important way of learning about some of those basics. I know for certain that as a slightly tragic young man I was obsessed by cricket, and still am, and I learned a lot of my maths from cricket scoring and cricket statistics and so on. You need to take a very broad view of the way people learn and understand things.

To come back to the first part of your question, I hesitate to say what any country can learn from any other country, because we all have our own unique and different circumstances. I think the lessons I have learned from just over three years as the Minister for Sport and Recreation relate to some of the themes that we have been talking about today. The first is the massive importance of integration. We must break down the silos between different government agencies if we are going to have success. It is a work in progress. It requires leadership from the likes of the Minister of Finance or the Chancellor to help drive that, but it also requires leadership from the ground up for agencies and different community groups to come together and understand the interactions between health and education and sport, not just physical health but mental health. A very important part of mental health is being active. It is about understanding that integration, and not just understanding it but letting it flow through to funding and to how we organise ourselves. One of the big lessons for me is that you have to keep pushing in on that.

The second lesson is: do not fall for the false dichotomy of high performance and community sport. They rely on one another; they are completely interdependent. If you do not have a strong community base built from young people staying involved, as we were discussing earlier, and having the organisations there, you simply will not create the high-performance athletes. In turn, the high-performance athletes provide massive pride and inspiration to people; you want to be what you can see. It is understanding that they are part of an ecosystem and that both need to be supported, but that they also need to be funded and managed and have strategies that understand the interrelationships with each other.

Thirdly and finally—again, I am not suggesting that the UK is not doing this; I am just saying that it is something I have learned—is the point we were just dwelling on, which is making sure that your strategies and your plans recognise the differences and the huge diversity that are the heartbeat of our communities and that make our communities such rich and interesting places. It is being really aware that that will require nimble and different strategies, campaigns, funding to make sure that we genuinely are reaching as many people as we can with sport and

recreation opportunities and understanding again that that can come from places you might not expect when you talk about play, active recreation and sport.

I am a massive believer in the power of sport and recreation to build communities. I have used this story a lot in New Zealand, so I do not mind using it in another forum. I have a stepdaughter who has two young children and she is bringing them up on her own. When they were a bit older she went back to playing netball. She was a very good netball player, but she had had to take time out when she had her children. Going back and playing netball gave her so many different benefits. It connected her to her community, and you can become very disconnected from a community when you are a solo parent and are just looking after your children. She had the opportunity to meet a whole new group of people and enjoy that company. It was inspiring to her children, to my grandchildren, who just loved seeing their mum run around on the netball court. Now they all want to dress in netball uniforms and do that. It was her comment to me that, "Just for an hour a week, I'm just me. I'm not Mum, because for the rest of the week that is what I am". She had that opportunity.

It is understanding the value that sport and recreation brings, all the wider benefits individually and collectively as a community. As you can tell, I am a bit of an evangelist for it, because I really believe it is part of strong communities.

Lord Addington: Have the opposition parties bought into any part of this vision? You said that your Treasury had a model already and you went into it. It is that background of how the entire political class buys into something, because if there is a danger that this will be scrapped with any change of government it has limited value. That one of the problems you have here.

Grant Robertson: Indeed. I am conscious of my time. I will not say that we have complete buy-in from the Opposition on the higher level of the well-being framework. They are still somewhat sceptical of elements of it, although they like some parts of it. On the good-news side of the ledger, there is very much a bipartisan approach in the sport and recreation environment, and by and large we have had strong backing for the different kinds of programmes in sport and recreation that we have been talking about today. That is advantageous to bedding them in, and we try to make sure that the Opposition are invited along to events and that they understand the motivation for what we are doing.

One of the interesting elements of that really brings us back to the very beginning of the discussion, which is that as the Minister for Sport my job is to appoint a board of people, who are then effectively Alice's bosses, and that helps to diminish some of the politics because it is arm's length. I set the strategy and the framework, but I am not the person who makes the funding decisions, and that helps. I agree with the premise of your question, Lord Addington, that getting cross-party buy-in for these

initiatives is very important. I will have to keep trying harder on the overall well-being framework with some of my colleagues.

Lord Addington: I will cut it there, because the Chair is looking daggers at me.

The Chair: No, I never look daggers, but that is an incredibly good place to finish this conversation. From my first question about well-being budgets, I have been reflecting on the fact that today is Budget Day in the United Kingdom. That is clearly dominated by the biggest health crisis the country has ever faced and the £100 billion of spending to try to resolve some of the problems that have arisen from it. You have given quite us an inspirational session, if I might say on behalf of the whole committee. The commitment that you and Dr Hume have given to a policy is immensely refreshing and it has given us new ideas, new thoughts and new hope. We thank you and Dr Hume very much indeed for getting up so early and giving us such a rewarding start, and for us finish, to the day. On that note, I declare this session closed.