



Select Committee on a National Plan for Sport and Recreation

Corrected oral evidence: National Plan for Sport and Recreation

Wednesday 10 March 2021

3.25 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; Baroness Morris of Yardley; Lord Moynihan; Baroness Sater; Lord Snape.

Evidence Session No. 15

Virtual Proceeding

Questions 118 - 124

Witnesses

I: Dr Liz Durden-Myers, Past Chair, International Physical Literacy Association, and Senior Lecturer in Physical Education, Bath Spa University and University of Gloucestershire; Ali Oliver MBE, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Sport Trust; Sue Wilkinson MBE, Chief Executive Officer, Association for Physical Education.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

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

Examination of witnesses

Dr Liz Durden-Myers, Ali Oliver and Sue Wilkinson.

Q118 **The Chair:** Good afternoon, colleagues. I extend a warm welcome to our three witnesses in the first session this afternoon of the House of Lords Select Committee on a National Plan for Sport and Recreation. We welcome Ali Oliver MBE, CEO of Youth Sport Trust; Sue Wilkinson MBE, CEO of the Association for Physical Education; and Dr Liz Durden-Myers, past chair of the International Physical Literacy Association and senior lecturer in physical education at Bath Spa University and the University of Gloucestershire, which is a fair old title to have. I hope that you are happy with us calling you Liz, and the other witnesses are happy to be called by their Christian names. We are a very friendly committee, but we are here to grill you because you are the professionals in the field.

A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the committee website. You will have an opportunity to correct anything that you feel we have got wrong, but rest assured that our clerks are so brilliant they very rarely get anything wrong.

Could I start by addressing a question to you, Liz? As a committee, we are concerned about the current state of PE in our schools in England. We are interested to know whether the 2019 school support and activity plan, which included activity in schools, is being implemented properly. We want to know what you think about the state of PE in England, and in particular, how you think it can be improved.

Dr Liz Durden-Myers: That is an interesting question. The landscape is mixed. There are some excellent examples of high-quality PE and sport provision up and down the country, but there is also a bit of a mixed landscape in relation to how we can improve current provision. We have a number of challenges in a range of areas. I will pick out one or two from across the spectrum.

In higher education, physical education undergraduate programmes are becoming increasingly academic, which means that our graduates are really proficient in sport sciences but we are losing practical application and pedagogic practice. We need to ensure that within higher education we embed practice and theory so that we can take the theory and enhance practice.

In the initial teacher training landscape, it is welcome that we have new routes into teaching through School Direct, PGCE and assessment only. However, all those routes into teaching need to be followed up with career-long professional learning that is rich and enables our new teachers and established teachers to respond to the changing challenges they face in education.

In the primary sector and in higher education, we still face challenges related to the limited provision of training. We are sending primary generalists into the teaching profession with as little as six hours' training

in physical education. It is not surprising that they come back saying they do not feel confident or competent to deliver physical education.

In the secondary space, PE is disappearing from the curriculum and being redirected to other academic subjects. That is really worrying, especially at key stage 4 level. There is a growing focus on examination PE and we are losing our core physical education identity. In the primary space, there is a lot of outsourcing of physical education curriculum time to coaching companies and a narrowing of the curriculum. We are losing a diverse range of opportunities for all children to experience a range of activities rooted primarily in enjoying being active.

Across the spectrum, we have challenges at every single level. A lot of that is underpinned by the lack of status and value of physical education at senior leadership level. It is not necessarily the senior leaders' fault; it is because we are not providing a clear strategy for what physical education and school sport should look like. We would like physical literacy to be at the centre of physical education, with the provision of clearer guidance and local networks to support senior leaders, generalist teachers and PE specialists to deliver a high-quality physical education offer.

The Chair: If I went to your institution, would that be the message you were giving to your undergrads as they go through education programmes? I do not sense that is the case across the country.

Dr Liz Durden-Myers: I can speak only from my own experience in my institutions. We are saying that there is a very challenging landscape. We are a marginalised subject and are often at the bottom of the priority list.

The Chair: What can this committee do to make a difference to that, because we have the ear of government?

Dr Liz Durden-Myers: Unfortunately, in order for anything in education in general to have value it is often associated with what Ofsted assesses. We would like Ofsted to hold senior leaders accountable for health and well-being, physical education and school sport at senior leadership level. We know that individual PE teachers and heads of departments are trying to champion it from the bottom up, but we need a top-down approach and whole-school approaches to value health and well-being and physical education. We see that in the new national curriculum for Wales. In Wales, they are approaching it a lot better than we are currently in embracing health and well-being as an area of learning experience and an overarching aim of the education offer.

The Chair: Sue, can I move to you? If you agree with Liz, do not repeat what she said. We are very anxious to get into this business. She mentioned in particular what Ofsted inspects, and Baroness Morris will come to that in a second. She mentioned the fact that a lot of PE is now outsourced. That, too, raises a concern about quality. In your answer, can you tell us what we can do to improve not only the status but the quality of what is going on for physical education in our schools?

Sue Wilkinson: I totally agree with everything Liz said, but we must also recognise excellent practice. Edward Timpson said that if one school can do it, every school should be able to do it. The issue is that a lot of schools do not really grasp what physical education is and see it as sport. It is not. Where we see excellent physical education, it is monitored by senior leaders. With the new inspection framework we are looking at systemic improvement, but it does not inspect specific subjects. As Liz said, if something is inspected, it is obviously valued more by some colleagues, so we could look at some kind of regulation of how well physical education, not just sport, is taught, because we have a physical education curriculum, not a sport curriculum.

Where physical education is taught well, it emanates into a good school sport programme that has a seamless transition to community activity, so, where our young people are getting a good experience, they are physically, emotionally, socially and cognitively well. Where it is not happening they are clearly disadvantaged. If Ofsted or a different body regulates to see whether we have high quality not only in physical education but in the school sport setting as well, it will make a positive difference. I am not sure whether Ofsted can do that now with the new inspection framework. We love it; it is great. It is broad and balanced, but would Ofsted have time to do that in a one-day inspection?

Liz has referred to status. We need to work with head teachers. Perhaps you could influence government to advocate with head teachers that where physical education is at the heart of a curriculum it has a phenomenal impact on children's and young people's well-being.

Ali Oliver: I will not repeat everything Liz and Sue said. They have both given a great account of some of the issues. We would repeat those points. To underline what Liz said about lost time, the DfE workforce survey reported that 53,000 hours of physical education has been lost in our schools in the last 10 years. This is a very real issue.

In your first question, you asked how we describe the state of physical education. Sadly, it is in decline right at the time when we probably all believe its contribution could be hugely significant for the issues facing young people from a well-being perspective. There is a growing evidence base on the impact of physical activity, physical development on cognitive performance and cognitive development. Therein lies one of the issues around its status and value in education; it is seen as one of a number of subjects, rather than as laying the fundamental foundation for learning across every subject. We know, now more than ever, as children return after the lockdown and interruptions of Covid, that physical education is one of the subjects that can be used to rebuild connectedness, self-confidence, self-esteem, a sense of belonging and teamwork, all things on which good learning in the classroom in any subject is built.

Throughout history, we have known that physical education has had a social purpose, whether it was the more therapeutic focus in the 1800s, or, at the start of the 20th century, preparing men for war, with military fitness being very much part of the approach. It feels that right now we

are on the verge of a brilliant moment in physical education where it could be repositioned in a way that delivers on well-being, personal development and character, all the things that we know as a nation we will need from this generation as we move out of the digital age and much more into the human age where what we can do as individuals and how we relate to one another is so important.

I agree with Liz on teacher training. I agree with Sue on accountability for the subject. All those things drive importance, but philosophically a restating of the intention of physical education, and why it is on the curriculum in our schools and what we intend it to deliver for young people, would be incredibly powerful at this moment, supported by a great teacher training programme to refresh the profession and the orientation of initial teacher training for those coming into the profession.

The Chair: Baroness Morris, can you take up the issue of being able to assess the role of PE in schools?

Q119 **Baroness Morris of Yardley:** Yes. I want to challenge a bit and play devil's advocate. Sue, I understand what you say about Ofsted and the consequence of PE not being high in its priorities, but I feel it is almost a failure if the threat of Ofsted is the lever we use rather than winning hearts and minds. There was agreement among all three of you that perhaps there is not an understanding of the new role of PE and sport in the curriculum. Sue, I think you referred to health and well-being; Liz, you talked about physical literacy. In my teaching days, we never talked about physical literacy.

What I am challenging you on is calling on Ofsted to be the lever that gets us where we want to be. I am nervous about that and nervous about its being a recommendation in our report, because it does not always happen. It has not happened in the past, and I am not sure that it helps with hearts and minds. Do you really think the best recommendation you would ask us to make is that we should get it inspected by Ofsted? Can we not do the more difficult task of explaining it to school leaders and holding them to account in other ways, so that they understand the change in curriculum that has happened over the last couple of decades in this area?

Sue Wilkinson: You are absolutely right. It should not be the lever, and we have to win hearts and minds. I have been an Ofsted inspector. When you go in and it is outstanding, what is the first thing the head teacher buys? A huge sign saying, "St Cuthbert's is an outstanding school", so endorsing it matters to heads. The endorsement of high quality should not be the carrot or the stick of punishment, but senior leaders understand that, when that judgment is made, it elevates the school. When it disappeared, the profession came to us as an association and said, "How can we celebrate our subject now without any external verification of how good we are?" That is important.

Baroness Morris, you are spot on in saying that hearts and minds have to be changed within. I think Liz said earlier that this is a multifaceted

question and we have to concentrate on getting it at the heart of the curriculum and explain why, and be articulate. I trained at Bedford when it was not called physical literacy; it was called human movement studies, but it was quite clear that it was about planned progressive learning and becoming competent both to learn to move and to move to learn. That has been lost a bit to sport in the confusion.

You are absolutely right. We need to change hearts and minds, and have a clear definition of the difference between PE and sport and physical activity and how they are inextricably linked, but also get on everyone's agenda that it is a great subject. I do not know whether that is part of Ofsted's role or an independent role. I would love schools to phone up Ofsted and say, "Come and have a look at our PE because it is wonderful". That would be brilliant.

Baroness Morris of Yardley: That is a good approach.

Dr Liz Durden-Myers: I agree with everything Sue said, and I would like to build on Ali's point. We need something to unite the PE profession. That is how we see physical literacy moving with the core principles that bind a profession together. Using physical literacy, we can all adopt the same common values and be process-driven around providing a holistic approach, inclusive person-centric experiences and a range of opportunities to respond to the growing and diverse needs of our young people. We call for physical literacy as a uniting movement for all of us to get behind and win hearts and minds, and to have a common language about how to promote physical activity in school sport within and beyond education.

The Chair: Ali, I presume you agree with all of that.

Ali Oliver: I do. May I add a brief comment?

The Chair: Yes, of course.

Ali Oliver: There is possibly also a point about assessment in physical education. I am conscious as a former teacher that we are very lucky to have physical education in the curriculum at all key stages, touch wood, but young people can come out of 11 years of physical education with nothing tangible to demonstrate what they have learned and acquired. This is linked to the Ofsted point. Because it is not assessed, benchmarked or progress-tracked in any way, it is very difficult to assess its broader impact on educational outcomes and to demonstrate its value to parents, carers and others who sometimes can play a role in where the subject sits. At the Youth Sport Trust, we have been calling for a national well-being measure, which does not necessarily assess physical education per se, but is something that physical education could very helpfully contribute to. A well-being measure is used in other countries to help target resources and improve both education and physical, emotional and social health.

The Chair: We will leave that. I am sorry I have overrun a little.

Q120 **The Earl of Devon:** Ali, perhaps I may turn to you and pick up your comment on what children end up with at the end of their school time, focusing particularly on what schools can do. What can schools do more of or do differently to instil a lifelong love of sport and recreation among their students, a love that continues beyond the end of school?

Ali Oliver: In some ways, the answer may lie in the question. If one of the intentions of physical education was to develop a lifelong love of sport and movement in young people, it would fundamentally affect the curriculum, the activities we deliver and the pedagogy. It comes back to the core ambition or purpose of the subject.

Beyond that, I absolutely align with Liz and Sue on physical literacy. The best chance we have of helping young people fall in love with moving is to make it feel nice and feel good, and that relies on developing confidence and competence at a young age, and harnessing as broad a range of activities as possible in the curriculum. Too often, PE is quite narrow for children and can be dominated by team sports and more traditional sports, yet there is an amazing array of activities that we can use as the vehicle through which to deliver physical education.

Finally, our work often demonstrates that developing young people as leaders and embracing their voice can be a huge driver for positive engagement in physical education in school sport, and subsequently support a lifelong habit of being active. For example, our Girls Active programme, which is all about getting more teenage girls engaged in sport and enjoying it, is predicated on the PE department working with the young girls who are least active, hearing their voice and listening to what they would like to do and would find enjoyable, and then co-creating the curriculum with them and, in many cases, developing them as leaders to organise and deliver elements of the lesson and elements of after-school sport. I would highlight those reasons.

The Earl of Devon: Sue, perhaps I could turn to you and the particular focus on how we get children who are playing sport at school to continue playing sport after school.

Sue Wilkinson: We would like a seamless transition. One of the statutory aims of the national curriculum, which has been there since 2014, is to lead active lifestyles. We have probably not delivered on that, if we are honest. I would like greater implementation of those aims; they are there. It is a wonderful curriculum. Where it seems to fall down is in the implementation phase. As Liz alluded to earlier, there should be more professional development support for teachers to see how they can embed that lifelong love of learning.

We had some challenges when it was first put into the curriculum. We asked how we could monitor embedding the love of it and get young people confident enough to talk to their parents and say, "I really want to do this", and, whether it is in the park, on a skateboard, skipping or in a formalised local club, "I want to be more physically active and involved in sport". It is the implementation stage that needs more emphasis when

we are teaching physical education, knowing why we are really doing it. There are all sorts of reasons, and they need to be explained to children and young people.

The Earl of Devon: Liz, do you have anything to add to those excellent answers?

Dr Liz Durden-Myers: We need a clear strategy that clearly defines the difference between physical education, school sport and the transition into the community. We need to bring community sport into school and bring schools into the community. We need to connect the local offer and create responsive curriculums that utilise what is available in the local community. It is not just thinking about physical education as an isolated curriculum, but how we can use it to empower individuals and devolve responsibility to them to become physically active in their own environment and local community.

The Earl of Devon: Should that be for the school to do, or is it for the local community? Who drives that interaction?

Dr Liz Durden-Myers: It needs to be a partnership; it needs to be driven from both sides. That is the only way it will be successful. If we want people to be active throughout life, we have to get them to start engaging in a wider range of activities and utilising the opportunities that are on our doorstep.

Lord Snape: My colleagues will forgive me for asking a question I put to earlier witnesses. I am the father of two girls and the stepfather of two other girls. What united them all was dislike of organised sport at school, particularly once they got into their teens. Alison, you were a schoolteacher. Is that still the attitude these days and, if so, how do we combat it, to ensure that not only do they enjoy sport more at school but continue in later life to enjoy sport and recreation?

Ali Oliver: Sadly, that is often a story we hear. We know from Sport England Active Lives data that there is a stubborn gap between girls and boys participating, which, despite many efforts over many years, we have not managed to narrow very much.

My answer would be that, first, it is probably not organised sport as a whole; it will be what they have experienced as organised sport. If that was one or two games that perhaps did not suit them, or that they did not find enjoyable, it might well put them off. That is why both Liz and I talked about the breadth of the curriculum and engaging young people in as many different sports as possible at a young age. In school sport and through physical education, developing confidence, and competence in movement so young people are able to turn their hand to lots of sports is very important.

Secondly, interestingly, we are seeing a huge boom at the moment in girls' football and rugby. As a former teacher—I can say this now; I have had counselling—I taught netball for many years to the same girls. It is

no wonder that I put a huge number off, because if they did not like it in year 7 they certainly would not like it by year 11. Often, the reflection we get that teenage girls do not like organised sport is more likely to mean they do not like one or two sports, or they do not like the way sport was taught and delivered, or the competence they had was not sufficient to enable them to enjoy the experience.

Lord Hayward: Liz gave examples of community sport brought into school. I do not want an answer now, but could she write to the committee citing examples of where it has worked well, because that is just the sort of thing we are looking at?

The Chair: Baroness Brady, did I miss you?

Baroness Brady: No. The Earl of Devon asked the follow-up question about who drives it. We know that young girls switch off; we know there is a drop-off and we have known for decades that the quality of PE has not been very good, but we do not seem to be making any progress.

The Chair: Earl Devon, do you want to come back on the question of Covid?

Q121 **The Earl of Devon:** Liz, perhaps you can address this first, quickly if possible. What should the Government's post-Covid-19 focus be to help children and young people get active again, given the terrible drop-off in physical activity during the last year?

Dr Liz Durden-Myers: We concur with that. One in three have not left the house, so we know that physical activity levels have declined dramatically, which means that there has been a detrimental effect on their motivation, confidence and physical competence to be physically active. We would like physical education and school sport to be placed at the heart of education anyway, but especially at this time, to harness the power of PE and school sport to bring people back together and reconnect them, and address social anxieties and respond to the inequalities that have been highlighted as a result of Covid-19.

We could use physical education in school sport as a medium just to enjoy being active and active together, and address health and well-being, but it will not happen unless we elevate the value of PE and school sport, recognise the importance of health and well-being and respond to the current worrying narratives about catching up, which just incur further anxieties. We would like to use PE and school sport as a vehicle through which we can start reconnecting with one another in an enjoyable, meaningful environment.

The Earl of Devon: Ali, could you answer the same question? Do you have some thoughts on specific funding that could be directed at this stage to school sports, or whether it should be?

Ali Oliver: The committee may or may not know that currently there is a national network of School Games organisers. There are 450 organisers funded through Sport England and the Department of Health and Social

Care. Their role is to increase the number of young people taking part in competitive sport in the maintained sector and make that experience more inclusive for young people. We think it would be obvious to extend their work programme. Those posts are three days a week at the moment. Last year, they collectively delivered 2.2 million competitive sport opportunities for young people, 10% of whom had special educational needs and disabilities. A big theme of School Games is to be inclusive.

There could be a simple top-up of that network for the summer term, or longer, depending on how long we feel we need to turbocharge the experiences of young people, but the network is fundamental right now, when teachers are very stretched with all the other expectations of them. If we want more sport, we need somebody who will co-ordinate it, organise it, plan it and get the officials if there are competitions - there is a whole range of things to do. Extending the School Games Organiser role would be a very simple step to take.

I would encourage the Government right now to make clear their intentions about the future of the primary PE and sport premium investment and the long-term future of School Games. If there is no confirmation forthcoming very soon, schools will not have plans in place for September and may well start to taper off their provision. If we want young people to come back into sport strongly, now is the time to up the capacity in schools. The School Games organisers work at the interface between school and community sport.

The Earl of Devon: Sue, do you have any further comments, maybe particularly about accessibility to playing fields and such over the summer?

Sue Wilkinson: We would support that. We are very pleased with the HAF, and everything that is going on to access sports facilities in schools because there are so many available. I would like to revisit what Baroness Morris said when she referred to hearts and minds. Physical education is the backdrop; PE is the bedrock. If that is not enjoyable, children and young people will not access school sport or physical activity; they will just do what they have to do in school.

We would encourage you to work with government to ask schools to have a broader, more balanced curriculum. We have worked with Sport England, particularly in the secondary market, as has Ali, on the secondary teacher training programme to help schools broaden their curriculum. There are activities there that young women in particular want to engage in. Studio You, which is about to be launched, is a phenomenal resource to help people engage children and young people in different activities, which we hope will then spill over into the community to get a seamless transition.

I urge first that physical education needs to be right in school, if young people are to access things in the summer and do extra activities and sport. As Liz said, they have been at home. One in three have not been

out, and we are already getting feedback that children are quite unfit; they are out of breath, but they are enjoying the social setting. That is in just three or four days. The young people have the appetite, but they must enjoy it and we must get the fundamental PE right in school, if they are to continue. It is about long-term planning, so that schools know whether they have a budget in primary and secondary for PE.

The Chair: We are fast losing time today. Baroness Morris, could you come in? A sports premium has been mentioned and I think you want to pick that up.

Q122 **Baroness Morris of Yardley:** We are interested in your views on the impact and effectiveness of the PE and sport premium. One thing we are particularly interested in is who is teaching it. Different words like "coaches", "outsourcing" or whatever have been used. Do you have any detail on that? You could still be a coach and trained teacher. Just because you are not on the staff roll of the school does not mean you do not have a teacher qualification. In your responses, could you comment on who is actually doing the work? On the whole, the question is about your views on the effectiveness of the premium.

Dr Liz Durden-Myers: It is a diverse picture. There are schools up and down the country that have utilised the PE and sport premium funding really well, increasing their provision, especially on things like swimming, which is normally an expensive activity but vital to include in the curriculum. Our rural schools use it for transport to competitions and so on, because that is very expensive. However, there have also been reports of widespread misuse of the PE and sport premium funding where it was not ring-fenced for its intended purposes. It has not been used sustainably, and it has been used as PPA cover, which is a massive concern for us.

There is also a lack of regulation about where curriculum PE is being outsourced. Coaching companies are springing up left, right and centre, and there is not necessarily any quality control over the nature of the individuals teaching young children. This is our major concern. We spend three years at undergraduate level and then a teacher training year, four years minimum, in order to get to the coalface as a qualified teacher, yet you can perform an NGB level 1 in coaching in one sport and potentially be at the coalface teaching students. There is a regulation and potentially a child protection and safeguarding issue.

However, there are some fantastic coaching companies out there. The main thing is that we have inspirational people at the interface working with children. Just because you are a qualified teacher does not necessarily mean that you are the right person to be at that interface, but if you are not confident or competent as a qualified teacher, that is the issue we should be trying to address. We would like more blended approaches, where the curriculum is delivered primarily by qualified teachers and enriched and enhanced by specialist coaches. What we see at the moment is the reverse.

In the primary sector, PE is predominantly being outsourced to coaching companies. That leads to a narrowing because they are not specialists in the range of curriculum activities. We are losing the pedagogic centre, of placing children at the heart of the relationship. If they see one coach for just an hour a week, there is no holistic viewpoint on the child. In any other subject that was outsourced—numeracy or literacy—that would never happen. It sends a massive message about the value of PE if we get a coach to come in and deliver it and it is not necessarily something that a qualified generalist teacher should attend to. Personally, I would love to see a return to predominantly qualified teachers teaching physical education, enhanced and enriched by coaching companies and specialists.

Baroness Morris of Yardley: Sue, do you want to comment?

Sue Wilkinson: You will recall that we used to have coaching for teachers where we had upskilling—the technical term—which was a great role for NGBs and coaches. There was a partnership. I totally concur, so I will not repeat everything Liz said.

We believe that teachers of physical education should be at the heart of getting some kind of transformational change in school. There is lack of sustainability. The whole purpose was that the premium was ring-fenced to be used in school so that sustainable infrastructure would evolve. As there is no regulation, we do not have PE advisers any more. We were all pedagogues who understood what high-quality PE was. We do not have anybody accountable for where that spend has gone. It is important that the premium remains ring-fenced because we need that investment.

There are some excellent providers who have engaged former teachers who also coach. I was a coach long before I became a teacher. The two go very well together, but an issue arises when it is inappropriate. As you know, our association has a big role in health and safety. That is key to keeping our young people safe and ensuring that they are taught by appropriately qualified people. The premium has been extremely effective in part, and not so effective where it has not been used for PE and sport activity and not delivered by appropriately qualified people. There is a lack of accountability now that it is no longer in Ofsted's brief.

Ali Oliver: You asked how we rate the effectiveness and impact of the premium. The simple answer is that it is very difficult to evaluate because there have been no national outcomes established, tracked and measured, so it is very difficult for anyone to say, other than at individual school level, whether it has made any difference. Therein lies one of the challenges. To date, about £1.8 billion has been spent on the primary PE and sport premium, which is a phenomenal and wonderful investment, but surely it should come with some expectation of clear outcomes that we can measure.

Even where the premium has had fantastic impact, and we have seen primary schools use it really well to build capacity, transform their curriculum and raise the profile of the subject, what happens is that students leave those primary schools and transition into secondary. As I

mentioned earlier, 38% of secondary schools, in our network at least, have cut time in the curriculum for PE in the last 10 years, so there is an imbalance. Do we want to give young people a phenomenal primary experience, if we can, only for them to experience in secondary that the subject has very low value, low status and a narrow offer? The overall effectiveness of it will be known in time when we see where some of those young people end up, post their secondary education.

Baroness Morris of Yardley: Ali, when you talk about it not being linked to the school, not working with teachers and the outsourcing, the answer to that is almost like reinventing the old school sport partnerships. I am going back 20 years. I worry that we are reinventing the wheel. Without going into a lot of detail, because I know that the Youth Sport Trust was very instrumental in making that work, is it worth us looking at some of the models that have been used in the past? They might have been an answer and perhaps were wrongly dropped.

Ali Oliver: We feel that one of the things we do not do very well in this country is learn from what we get right and keep it going. We often move away from things that are going really well in favour of something different. There were some weaknesses in the school sport partnership model, and investing in schools has given some head teachers far greater ownership, accountability and authority over what happens, rather than receiving it top-down, but without doubt the issues about outsourcing come down sometimes to ill-informed consumers.

That is no fault of the school leader, bursar or whoever is investing the money, but if they do not understand the difference between PE and sport and between coach and teacher, they will have no understanding of what it looks like when the money is invested well. Whether it is former PE advisers in local authorities or school sport partnerships, we absolutely advocate having a team of experts at local level who can not only advise but co-ordinate and plan some of the things that the School Games organiser network does now and, as Liz said, be that role between school and community, making sure that there is a managed transition. Therefore, there could be some form of school sport partnership.

Baroness Morris of Yardley: But not the original.

Ali Oliver: Yes.

Baroness Morris of Yardley: Thank you.

The Chair: I confess I find it surprising. When I was a head and employing a maths teacher, I would have a set of criteria on which I would appoint somebody. If, as I did yesterday, I want a plumber, I go to Checkatrade and get a set of criteria to deliver one, yet somehow we do not have the ability to bring in people with a set of criteria to make sure they fit the needs we have. I just do not understand that, but I will leave it up in the air—I promised I would not do that. We will move on to Lord Moynihan.

Q123 Lord Moynihan: I would like to focus on the relationship between local communities and schools, or local clubs and schools. I start by saying that obviously we recognise the distinction between PE and sport. Liz, I totally echo what you say about the importance of improving PE teaching and PE specialists, because if we can solve it within the schools, we will not need continually to outreach and get everybody else involved, many of whom are unqualified.

Against that background, focusing on the importance of making that the priority, there is, especially with sport, the opportunity for greater links with sports clubs in the community. For all the good work that the Youth Sport Trust does, with 450 school organisers, that is not even one per constituency, yet if you go into a constituency there are football clubs and clubs for all sorts of different activities. Thirty-five years ago, this was high on the agenda when I was a Minister. I do not think it has changed at all in the 35 years since then. If anything, it is worse, but I hope you will persuade me otherwise.

Should it not be the case that there is much stronger emphasis on linking clubs for those who are keen on sport—I am not talking about the curriculum for PE at the moment—to get fit, tackle obesity and enjoy sport? Should there not be specific government measures to overcome issues such as clubs coming into schools, insurance costs and the cost of lighting, and facilities after hours? Should there not be a concerted effort to address that question as supplementary to attacking the most important thing, which is the deficiencies in PE teaching, PE specialists and the funding necessary to improve that?

Dr Liz Durden-Myers: It is an important agenda. We need to make sure, however, that we have high-quality experiences across the board, whether that is in school or out in the local community. We know there are issues with participation rates in local community sport. Using school facilities as the centre where physical activity may happen, or school and club links can happen, will potentially increase participation numbers, but we need to redefine what we mean by sport club links.

We would like to move away from sport and towards a more physical activity basis, so that we can engage with a wider range of providers, but we need to make sure that, when anyone comes into contact with our children, we do not inadvertently promote opportunities for early specialisation. We would like them to be multi-sport activities, especially lower down the school, and ensure that participation versus performance is balanced. Often, we use grass-roots sport as elite performance pathways. We need to make sure there is no early specialisation, that it is multi-sport or even multi-activity, and that it is fundamentally around enjoyment and a high-quality experience, and we stave off routes for elite performance until later in life.

Lord Moynihan: Sue, having heard that, do you agree, bearing in mind that one of the big challenges, which we have not really focused on, is the importance of making the enjoyment and experience of PE and sport inclusive for girls. For all too long, that has not necessarily been the case.

Traditional competitive sports are not necessarily high in the interests of a lot of girls.

Do you think there should be greater engagement not just with sports clubs but across the board with activities in the community—in other words, far more engagement between the community and schools, with parents becoming more involved and more out-of-hours use of school facilities, and vice versa? Do you think that is a critical pathway to address obesity, inactivity and the challenges of boredom, for example, that exist among many young people today?

Sue Wilkinson: Absolutely. I could not agree more. When I was a lecturer, I was very privileged to work in Gothenburg. The Swedish model is very good. There is no early specialisation, and there is a link between school and community. It is not just traditional sports. I am very involved in our local cricket club. It is not just cricket; it is cricket, tennis and football, and it is open to all young people. It encourages girls to be active in those areas. There are those who prefer to do Pilates and yoga, and opening school sites for that will keep costs down and make it more accessible. Perhaps local communities can get more involved. One of our board members, Kiran Bali, has just tried to engage Muslim women in cricket. It has been hard for her to do that, but she has succeeded with a lot of motivation and no funding.

The local picture has to be looked at. There is no silver bullet; one size will not fit all. We have to look at how we can be inclusive right across the country. It may be traditional sports clubs; it may be opening up school facilities to very different activities that engage everybody, as well as having a seamless transition from school into clubs.

Lord Moynihan: Ali, concern in the early days with regard to the Youth Sport Trust was that it was either duplicating or overlapping the governing bodies of sport, which were very active in the field, some existing exclusively to look after schoolchildren, putting on competitions, et cetera. Do you think that in the work you are doing—the bridge, as it were, between schools and clubs—there could be greater co-operation, and a greater role for clubs affiliated to governing bodies as well as the governing bodies in the sector?

Ali Oliver: Without dwelling on the past, we are now working closely with governing bodies. School Games is an excellent model where the national governing bodies own the competition format. They have worked with us to develop age and stage-appropriate formats, and developed alternative formats that are urban, extreme or slightly modified versions to appeal to a broader audience. To be clear, the Youth Sport Trust does not employ the School Games organisers; they are directly funded by Sport England and the Department of Health and Social Care, but they are employed in schools by schools, and work across a number of schools, very similar to the former school sport partnerships. Our job is to work with the governing bodies to support them to develop age and stage-appropriate content, and then we work with the School Games organiser network to

support them to run local competitions in partnership with local NGB clubs.

I want to echo one thing that both Liz and Sue talked about, which is opening up school sites. We know from Sport England data that 40% of all our sports facility estate is on school sites, which is 77% of sports halls and 61% of artificial pitches. Creating schools as multi-sport hubs in the community, which offer an extended school day, or active wraparound care, will allow us both to reach young people for whom normal NGB clubs or, as Sue mentioned, other leisure providers are out of reach geographically or financially, and to make better use of the estate that we have and drive closer links between schools and clubs, particularly where junior clubs on the school site can be satellites of adult clubs in the community. We can then get what Liz is calling for, which is a multi-sport experience delivered by coaches and specialists working with children and young people, but the junior clubs would be intrinsically linked and have a clear pathway to the local community club as children grow up.

Lord Moynihan: I recall a major debate at the beginning of School Games about whether or not they were open to independent schools. Are they now open to independent schools?

Ali Oliver: They are open to independent schools. What tends to happen is that some of the bigger independent schools engage with School Games for sports they do not traditionally engage in, or sometimes highly successful independent schools have teams in various competitions and the School Games will be one of them.

Lord Moynihan: It is a positive step in the right direction.

The Chair: Lord Addington, do you want to put a very brief question?

Lord Addington: I am not sure that it is a very brief question, but maybe the witnesses can come back to us. Are local sports clubs good deliverers of sport outside their own expertise? Are there examples of that? There is a tendency to say, "We must recruit. We must get people involved", which is another way of turning people off because they get involved in something that is not for them, but they might say, "Can we go on to something else?" Do you have examples where that has worked or has not worked? Knowledge about failure is fine.

Dr Liz Durden-Myers: I have worked with Sport Wales, which has been working with Welsh national governing bodies on exactly that front. NGBs and sports clubs can be quite protective about their numbers. That is a potential barrier to a multi-sport approach. However, there are initiatives we can take. For example, we ran a racquet sports summer camp in Wales, bringing racquet sports together. We need to think about how we capture numbers and participation differently, so that, if you lose a participant from squash but they re-enter in badminton, it should not be a net loss; it should just be an exit route to something else. We could redefine how we measure participation and encourage closer

collaboration. There is a big crossover between badminton, squash, tennis and so on. Often, you do not lose them; you just lose them to another sport, but that should not be counted as a loss; it should be counted as a loss only if they disengage from physical activity altogether. Bringing sports together and trying to get them to be more collaborative definitely needs to be addressed.

The Chair: Lord Addington, we will leave that question, if you do not mind, because there is a vote going on which I think Members will want to deal with. I want to leave a bit of time for the last question from Baroness Sater.

Q124 **Baroness Sater:** I declare an interest. I am co-chair of a newly formed APPG on sport and physical activity in the criminal justice system.

You have given us some very good insight into the many issues about which we have asked you today. It has been really interesting to hear your expert views and ideas on a whole range of subjects. You have given us some recommendations to go away and think about, but we would like to hear the top two recommendations that you would like the committee to make to government. What would those two top priorities be?

Dr Liz Durden-Myers: I would like us to embrace physical literacy as a concept that unites PE, school sport and community sport, enabling us to articulate our common values and guiding principles. It would be a holistic approach that values inclusive and person-centric environments and a range of opportunities, with physical literacy being the core message around our early encounters with physical activity and promoting physical activity for life. Secondly, to make good on those claims, we need to improve the quality and provision of PE and school sport, and potentially local sport club provision, by providing lifelong professional learning opportunities, localised support networks and helping the transition between education and community sport and physical activity.

Sue Wilkinson: I would like us to invest to ensure that we have a world-class profession to deliver high-quality physical education, school sport and physical activity so that it improves the status of PE in schools. Secondly, we should have some kind of regulatory framework that ensures we are more accountable for the investment in PE, sport and physical activity and the impact it is having in raising standards in school.

Baroness Sater: Could you expand a little on the regulatory framework?

Sue Wilkinson: It would be some kind of framework that ensures that schools are accountable to deliver high-quality physical education. I do not want to use Ofsted. Baroness Morris is absolutely right. It should not be the tail that wags the dog. There needs to be a framework to ensure that what is on offer in PE, school sport and physical activity is regulated, to ensure that we get more bang for our buck and that there is evidence of impact on children's physical, emotional, social and cognitive well-being.

Ali Oliver: I would love this inquiry to lead to a recommendation that government establishes a long-term, joined-up, cross-departmental strategy to make our children the happiest and healthiest in the world. I think that would bring with it a courageous and bold ambition around well-being and a national measure of well-being.

Secondly, to go back to what Baroness Morris asked me earlier, we at the Youth Sport Trust know from our experience over 25 years that to deliver a national strategy to 24,500 schools we must have a team, a local network of experts, who can both drive that strategy on the ground and support schools and build capacity in schools so that the strategy is sustainable in the long run.

The Chair: Who should be the experts?

Ali Oliver: When I say a team, I think there should be someone with expertise in physical education; someone akin to the School Games organiser who can organise, manage and deliver school sport; also, some of the expertise that we see, for example, in the active partnerships to open up school sites and help school business managers know how to make that possible as well, so that we unlock the estate.

Baroness Sater: Ali, earlier you mentioned well-being measures being delivered by other countries. Would it be possible, perhaps after the meeting, to let us know about the information you were referring to? It would be interesting to see some of the background knowledge that has been helpful to you in your thinking.

Ali Oliver: I will do that. The Gregson Family Foundation has led a lot of it, so I will share with you some of its work.

The Chair: Thank you all very much indeed, Ali Oliver, Sue Wilkinson and Liz Durden-Myers. You have been splendid witnesses this afternoon. I hope you have enjoyed the session with us. I thank the committee for a good range of questions. There will be a transcript of the session, which you can correct if necessary. Thank you very much indeed for joining us. This particular session is now over.