

Select Committee on a National Plan for Sport and Recreation

Corrected oral evidence: National plan for sport and recreation

Wednesday 21 April 2021

3.35 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. 18

Heard in Public

Questions 136 - 143

Witnesses

I: Sanjay Bhandari, Chair, Kick It Out; Arun Kang, Chief Executive Officer, Sporting Equals; Janett Walker, Professional Mentor of the Founder, Black Girls Hike.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

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

Examination of witnesses

Sanjay Bhandari, Arun Kang and Janett Walker.

Q136 **The Chair:** Good afternoon and welcome to this session of the House of Lords Select Committee on a National Plan for Sport and Recreation. We welcome to the committee our witnesses this afternoon: Sanjay Bhandari, chair of Kick It Out; Arun Kang, CEO of Sporting Equals; and, Janett Walker, the professional mentor of the founder of Black Girls Hike. Welcome to you all.

Members of the committee may put a question to a specific witness, otherwise, all witnesses are expected to answer a question. I will start with Sanjay Bhandari. Welcome and thank you for joining us. We are looking back at the Government's efforts over the last five to 10 years to get more people from ethnic minority backgrounds to engage in sport and recreation and leading active lifestyles. We have had mixed reports on how well that has worked. There seems to be a lot of fluctuation. Putting aside the pandemic, although you might want to comment on the pandemic, how do they feel the Government's efforts and government policies over the last five to 10 years have worked out? Have they been positive and do you have any comments?

Sanjay Bhandari: Thank for inviting me to give evidence. As well as being the chair of Kick It Out, I have another role that is perhaps more relevant to this. I am a trustee of one of the active partnerships, GreaterSport, which is the active partnership for Greater Manchester. I know that GreaterSport has also submitted evidence to you. From that experience I would say that the results are probably patchy and perhaps built on an understandable philosophy of open invitation. It is built a little bit on, "If we build it, they will come", and we make the access open without developing a granular, contextual understanding of the barriers to engagement.

That is probably where the next step needs to be. We need to understand not "hard-to-reach communities", a phrase that is often used. I am not hard to reach; I have always been here. I am hardly reached, and I am hardly reached because you are not talking to me in the way in which I want to be talked to and you are not listening to me and understanding the barriers that I might experience. Our understanding, particularly of people from black, Asian and dual-heritage backgrounds, is that there is still quite a common overlap with low socioeconomic groupings. The reality is that the biggest predictor of outcomes is still poverty. If you are born poor, all your outcomes will be commensurately worse.

Some of the challenges that people in underrepresented communities have are also linked to the socioeconomic background. It is things like access to transport to get to places where physical activity takes place. It is having systems and structures that are built for movement, and subtly our systems and structures over the 10, 20 years have been moved against movement, particularly for children and young people but it affects adults as well. As a population, we move less.

Arun Kang: The DCMS sporting future strategy in 2015 probably went the furthest on inclusion than we had gone in the sports sector, which that was a good start. On the government perspective, there have been quite a lot of good consultation sessions, but it feels a bit like a kneejerk approach. It comes and goes, and we need stronger momentum and a sustained approach on this agenda. Talking about ethnically diverse communities and physical activity, if you look at the last four years, the black and south Asian communities have been the least active of all groups. Some would say that they have not moved at all, the percentages are that low. There are a lot of issues that we need to be dealing with, from the Government and right through, but government needs to lead the way.

I am excited by the new Sport England strategy, Uniting the Movement. It focuses on communities that are underrepresented by race, disability, gender and so on, and it has a focus on ethnically diverse communities. It is a 10-year strategy and will take a bit of time. It will be great to see where it goes.

Janett Walker: Thank you for inviting me. I completely concur with Sanjay and Arun, but I want to add that it is quite telling that I do not really know what the progress has been at the grass roots, and I think that is important. How are you reaching us? How are you involving us? How are you making sure that our voices are heard? I had to do a good search to see what progress had been made and, frankly, I could hardly find anything at all. If progress is being made, it is not being communicated to the people you are trying to reach, and that needs to change for any progress to start making a serious impact.

It is also quite telling, given the prominence of black athletes in so many sports, especially football. Sports should be at the forefront of change rather than bringing up the rear. You would expect that to be an area where we saw a much more massive amount of movement over the last five or 10 years, and we have not seen that. We need more than these temporary measures, with a little amount of funding thrown into the pot and very little movement happening. We are looking for long-term change, and we need to include the people who are in those positions as part of that change rather than the people in positions of power deflecting, dismissing and ignoring.

The Chair: Janett, that is a powerful statement. Thank you for that. What should the Government be doing and what should you be doing? You are part of a very successful organisation that is very outspoken. What should the Government be doing to listen to you?

Janett Walker: I think the Government need to be doing a lot more. Obviously we have been here before, with Stephen Lawrence, with Grenfell, and today we have just heard the news on George Floyd. I know that is America, but it has impact on this side of the pond.

We have lots of grass-roots organisations. I am the chair of Anti Racist Cumbria. I am here representing Black Girls Hike, but Rhiane, who is one

of the founders there, is also a trustee for Anti Racist Cumbria. We see lots of these grass-roots organisations making great inroads into putting black and brown people into different kinds of outdoor activities, recreational activities and various kinds of sports. Last week, Anti Racist Cumbria held an Insta takeover called Black and Brown Faces in Outdoor Spaces. It was a huge success. We had Black Trail Runners, Black2Nature, the Hillwalking Hijabi, Steppers UK, Go-Where Scotland and Mòr Diversity, to name just a few of the organisations that are out there and leading the charge. But that is coming from the grass roots, and that is what we are seeing all the time. It is the grass-roots organisations making the change and making it happen. They are out there, despite the barriers, showing that we want to participate in all kinds of sports.

We are not finding government and organisations linked, all these governing bodies playing their part in making sure that this happens. We have Black Girls Hike, the Ramblers and the British Mountaineering Council, for example. They could have organised a Black Girls Hike, but they did not. They sat and waited for somebody else to do it. We need to see these organisations stepping up to the plate and leading the charge as well as just saying that things need to change. We have been here before. We have been here many times. This time, we need to be taking it 100% seriously.

The Chair: Arun and Sanjay, do you support the view that it is time the Government stepped up to the mark more and listened more carefully?

Sanjay Bhandari: Definitely listen more carefully. What I was talking about was moving from assuming that you can build it and they will come to asking questions of the community, understanding the barriers and overcoming them. There needs to be much more understanding of the barriers and weaving that back into system design. Sometimes the barriers might be something that you do not think about. If you are designing swimming pools and leisure centres with all-glass frontages, it is a challenge for people who come from some cultural heritages to have their bodies seen in that way and to go into that kind of environment. Designers could have thought about that when they were building a leisure centre or a swimming pool in that locality and discovered that by talking to the local people who they were expecting to populate it.

It is about encouraging that kind of design thinking. There is a limit to what you can drive from the centre. You can drive cultural change, but initiatives have to be driven from the community up, from the grass roots. That can involve a bit of relinquishing control and relinquishing a set of central KPIs that you are driving activity by.

Q137 **Baroness Blower:** Some of the responses that you have already given go to some of the things that I am going to ask about. This question goes first to Janett. What can you tell us about the range of experiences of different ethnic groups within diverse communities with regard to participation in sport and recreation? How does that help us to think about ways to improve and promote inclusion?

I note that the language you are using, in your written material and in speaking today, is “black and brown people”. As a parliamentary body, we have been talking about ethnic communities. I am very happy to hear you, in passing, talk about language and whether it is an issue and how you see that.

Janett Walker: A huge question there, Baroness Blower. I think what we are looking at is that we need to do better in different sports. We have a high percentage of people in athletics and sports such as football. That is primarily where we tend to see black and brown people. We need to widen that range. By reason of the barriers and all the things we are flagging to you today, we are not seeing black and brown people in those other areas. We do not see black and brown people in sailing or rowing or traditional winter sports such as skiing. They are elite sports that we are not making any progress in.

We need to see more representation in those areas, but we cannot just turn up and become a famous skier or horse rider. Things need to be put in place for us to come up from right down at the grass roots. Sanjay is right: we need to come up from the grass roots. The grass roots need to drive it, but it has to come from both ends. While we have the grass roots bringing it up from this end, we need the funding to be injected. Again, Sanjay is right about some of those in positions of power. They need to shift so that we get the right people around the table. We need the funding to be properly injected rather than poured in piecemeal. We need the big five sports organisations to get black and brown people around those tables being able to contribute to the ideas and discussions and being a part of what is being built and created, rather than being told afterwards.

Sanjay’s example of the swimming pool is vital. We are constantly told, “This is what we are going to do for you. This is what we are going to put in place for you. This is what we think you need”. What we really need is for you to put us around the tables so we can better explain some of those barriers to you and you can understand them a lot better—things that you have never had to consider, never had to think about, that have never been an issue for you. We are saying that we can help you with that if you bring us in and put us around the table so that we can talk to you about it.

I hope that answers your question, Baroness Blower.

Baroness Blower: It does, very well.

Arun Kang: My view on the experience of ethnically diverse communities is that we need to acknowledge the fact that experiences are very diverse. It goes into the theme of intersectionality that people talk about. It is about multiple discrimination. If you are black and disabled, that is double discrimination; it is not going to be the same just because you are black. If you are a black disabled female, that is treble discrimination. We need to acknowledge that these things are happening.

Statistics show this. Sporting Equals did some research analysing Active Lives by Sport England. It showed that, for disabled black people, activity rates were down to 41.8%—and black communities were already quite low anyway, at 57% generally. Activity for disabled people dives right down even further. It is the same for black or south Asian women. The rates dropped to 45% or 46%, because of multiple discriminations. You do not just have, for example in disabled terms, transport issues, the cost of access and so on. On top of that you have language difficulties, the need for female-only provision, access to information and so on.

I also want to make a point about terminology. You asked a question about that. From Sporting Equals' point of view, and my own, it comes down to respecting and relating to communities. A lot of the time we say to our organisations, "Be more specific about who you are targeting". If it is the black community, say so. If you are targeting African Muslim women, please say so. Using umbrella terms such as BAME or black, Asian and minority ethnic is just too broad and we are not sure who you, as organisations, are targeting. That is something we have led the way on.

Sanjay Bhandari: I will pick up on a couple of things, but on the terminology first. I had a corporate career before I moved into this role. I was part of the Parker review on ethnicity of UK boards and I am still part of the steering group. We looked at the FTSE 100 and beyond. We spent the longest time in that committee trying to define the people we were seeking to help and what phrase we should use. Can we use "people of colour"? Should we use this phrase, should we use that phrase? It is a quite difficult area. We had the same challenge when we were working with the FA and other football authorities about the football leadership diversity code.

These things evolve. I would say that it is time to go beyond BAME. We should not forget that the use of that collective noun was quite useful, because it got organisations comfortable with setting representation targets at that umbrella level. My point is that it has now outlived its usefulness. It is now time to go beyond BAME, because it masks inequalities within.

My two worlds are opposites. When I was in the corporate world, the presence of A completely masked the absence of B. If I walked around the city, I would see lots of people who looked like me and I would see very few people who looked like Janett. As I go round football, I see many people who look like Janett and I do not see many people who look like me. The presence of B masks the absence of A. That is why it is time to go beyond BAME and get more granular, because we are more comfortable with that now as a society. We are ready for it, and maybe we were not ready for that 10 years ago. Now that we are ready for it, we should do it.

Arun and Janett have said it all on activity. The only thing I would add is that because this is a broad church—sport, recreation, activity—we also have to separate activity and participation at a grass-roots level from

pathways to elite. In a sport like football, which is close to my heart, there are incredible activity levels for male, female, black and Asian across the board.

On the question about pathways, I would put it this way. If you are a white man in football, you can reasonably expect to have a career until you are in your 50s, which is when your coaching career dips out. If you are a black man, you can reasonably expect a career until you are 35, because you have broken through the glass ceiling of playing but you have not broken through the glass ceiling of coaching. If you look like me or my nephews or my great nephew, who was born on Friday, his reasonable career expectation is to nine years old, because he is not going to get into the academy. If Chadli, Messi or Iniesta were born Asian in this country, they would not get into an academy, because the perception is that your physical size means that you are not able to get the breakthrough and you carry a bunch of stereotypes with you into that assessment.

Participation is good, but pathways through to elite still need to be thought about and you need to break it down more granularly. Is it different for black people? Is it different for Asian people? Is it different for men? Is it different for women? Is it different for people with other protected characteristics?

Lord Addington: I wonder about the relationship between class and ethnicity, if I am using the correct term, because it is always a factor that goes through. Is it a multiplier? I assume it is a multiplier here, because if you come from a black, working-class background there are problems. How do you work that into your answers? Is it intrinsic in what you are saying, or are there certain assumptions that I am missing?

The Chair: Who would like to take that question?

Sanjay Bhandari: I am happy to offer an initial observation. We are talking about intersectionality here, are we not? All these things cross over. It is very difficult to disentangle the impact of any one characteristic.

I will use myself as an example. I am male. That gives me some inherent advantages, because I am part of the majority. But I am Asian and brown, which gives me some inherent disadvantages, because I am not part of the majority. I was born poor and from a working-class background. That gives me some inherent disadvantages. But I managed to get into Oxbridge. That gives some advantages, which I acquired.

How do I disentangle which bits are advantages and which bits are disadvantages? If you have many, many disadvantages stacked up, they accumulate. If you are black and poor and you do not have educational achievements, all those things stack up and have a multiplier effect, as Arun was saying earlier on. That is my experience. If you are a bit of a mix, like many of us are, it is quite difficult to disentangle correlation from causation and from which factor.

The Chair: I will leave that question there.

Baroness Morris of Yardley: Perhaps you might want to point us to a source for this information rather than go into a long discussion, but you have all mentioned the importance of understanding the barriers for different groups. I agree with that. I am worried that we do not know what we do not know about it. I think I know what the barriers are, but the strong message I got from you was that there are lots of barriers that we are not aware of because we do not listen as carefully as we ought to. To make sure, without asking you to go into details, is there a source, a report or research, that you could point us to so that we better understand what those barriers are? I know exactly what you meant when you said we do not understand some of the barriers.

Arun Kang: Sporting Equals has done quite a lot research on different specific groups, for example Somali Muslim women. We targeted them in detail. We can provide a lot of these resources if need be. Our website has most of that research there already. There are barriers that we know about, but society changes. We need to keep up with that.

Janett Walker: One of your best resources is not only to listen but to have the people from a wide range of black and brown communities, whatever description we want to give to those communities, who are involved on the ground. If you have them as part of your table, you will get a lot of that information direct from the source.

The Chair: Janett, we are hearing that a great deal during this inquiry in all sorts of areas. Baroness Blower, I would like you to get the other piece of your question in, if you do not mind.

Q138 **Baroness Blower:** The other piece of my question is: how does all this help us to think about how to improve and promote inclusion?

The Chair: I am thinking about the national sporting governing bodies and other delivery bodies, such as Active Partnerships.

Baroness Blower: I do not think I have that in front of me.

The Chair: Let me pick that question up. How can national sports governing bodies and other delivery bodies, such as Active Partnerships, better promote inclusion? Sanjay, you ought to start with that.

Sanjay Bhandari: It goes back to that earlier conversation about whole-system thinking: thinking about culture, policy, strategy, governance and structural reform; thinking about transformation; thinking about identifying those challenge, blockers and barriers; and building and designing things with local communities where you are going to be placing things.

I suppose that has to link into other things as well: making activity a central part of any local hub of activity and deciding how you can build activity into the transport policy and the education policy. How do you then design a city so that it encourages activity and movement? Some of

this could just be encouraging people to walk to the shops every day and do their daily mile. We get greater benefit from making the inactive active than from making the active more active. Some of this really is about having systems that help to create a better-designed city that promotes activity.

Then there are all sorts of other things, like encouraging greater diversity targets on boards and in senior leadership teams, continuing the good work on outreach and encouraging participation.

- Q139 **The Earl of Devon:** I am prompted by Janett's comment about Black Girls Hike and the concept of minority ethnic communities participating in what are essentially British activities, such as the Ramblers. As we are looking at activity, as well as sports? Are there areas of minority ethnic activity that we do not recognise as such and that we are failing to identify? We have discussed sports and recreation, but are there things that we are just not counting as activity and well-being activity because we do not see them, because the Government do not recognise them as activities? That is a question for Janett, but Sanjay and Arun may also have views on it.

Janett Walker: A lot of the sports that we want to participate in and be a part of are sports that are just the same across the board. Black and brown people are the same as everybody else. We want to be able to walk to the shops and do our mile a day, to run, to hike. Some of us want to be able to ski or skateboard or whatever the activity might be. It is more that we do not get the access. There are barriers that stop us from being involved in those activities and being able to participate in them—all the things that we have talked about already as to why that impacts. Fewer black and brown people have access to a car, for example. Being able to just drive out to the countryside to go for a walk is a much bigger issue for us.

It is about educating people as well. For a lot of black and brown people, being out in nature has always been a very important part of the communities and the cultures that we have come from, but because many of our communities now live in urban areas, access to those areas is not there for us. It is about having that education and having it built into schools and sporting networks so that it becomes much more part of our daily activity and daily lives. A lot of that is happening at the grass-roots level, but we have not seen enough of that coming from the other end—from the national bodies and the Government.

- Q140 **Lord Moynihan:** What recommendations do you think we should be making to tackle the racism and abuse that takes place both on the pitch and in social media against athletes, as well as against commentators and spectators? It comes in two parts. Social media is one and the other is on the pitch. Several people have spoken about football. In the last couple of days, there has been a major announcement that Tracey Crouch is going to undertake, and I quote the Prime Minister, "a root-and-branch review" of football. Do you think that is an important opportunity to address the issues of racism and abuse, and what

specifically do you hope will come out of her review? Janett, you were nodding, so perhaps you can go first.

Janett Walker: One of the big issues with racism on social media and on the pitch is education. We need the governing bodies to be collaborating with schools, because this sort of thing starts from when children are very small and it starts in the home, in the media, in what people see in their communities and what they are told, and in the visuals and books—all those sorts of things.

If we had a better education system, and if we had these national governing bodies working more closely with schools to tackle racism and enabling and supporting schools to become actively anti-racist, when people got out into the social media we would have more people drowning out those racist voices. We would have more people who are actively anti-racist allies saying, "This is no longer acceptable. This is no longer something that we will allow to happen".

It would be the same in the stands. When you had one or two lone voices shouting racist abuse or making monkey noises, everyone else would be saying, "No, that is not acceptable. That is not what we do here. We do not tolerate racism here". If that was coming from all the other voices, we would start to see change, but it starts in the classrooms. It starts right back there and brings it back up into the communities and beyond.

As for racism in football, we need to have zero tolerance. If that means that a match has to be cancelled or postponed—I am not a football person and I am probably treading on sacred ground right now—that is where we have to get to. As far as we are concerned, if supporters of a team come along and even only 10 voices are making racist comments, you do not have those supporters at the next match; everyone is banned. If you start to say to the few, "You are spoiling it for everyone", the few will have to start rethinking their views and their values and the way they approach these things. Zero tolerance—from the fans, the officials, the referees, the umpires—is important. Right across the board we have to start dealing with racism in football and so many other sports in that zero-tolerance manner.

Lord Moynihan: Thank you, Janett. Sanjay, I anticipate that this is sacred ground for you. If you would like to make recommendations in this context, they would be very helpful to us. There are two elements to this. There are specific recommendations that we should be considering and making in the context of social media and on the pitch. We all have in our minds the unacceptable behaviour that occurs all too often in football but in other major spectator sports as well.

Sanjay Bhandari: Of course, this the day job for Kick It Out and has occupied a lot of my time over the last 18 to 20 months, since I have been at Kick It Out. You separate on the pitch and social media. On the pitch, you can almost separate between the elite and the grass roots. At elite level, you have player on player, fan on player, fan on fan. They are different types of activity. Player on player, and even fan on player, is

relatively rare. It is just that when they happen they are high profile and they get lots of attention, and we have relatively robust systems for dealing with those things.

However, we need some consistency in enforcement and tariffs. Someone might get banned for 10 games for calling someone a racist term, but someone else gets banned for 12 games for a betting infraction that does not compromise sporting integrity. That tells you something about the morals of the organisations and the sports when it says that betting is a much more heinous crime than racism. We have to get the morals right, and we have to campaign with UEFA and others to get that right.

The fan-on-fan stuff is very similar to the grass-roots stuff in that it happens much more commonly. There is relatively little data about it. There is low confidence in reporting, because there is low confidence in outcomes. The challenge there is how to build the confidence in people that if they report they will get meaningful and consistent outcomes, and, most importantly, very quick outcomes. Justice delayed is justice denied, particularly in grass-roots sports where you could be playing the other team before your hearing comes up, and that becomes a massive challenge. That is something we are working on very closely with the FA to help to create some transparency.

Then we come to the really big problem, which is social media. The reality is that this is the biggest problem we face. It is a completely lawless battleground of hate. It is like the Wild West because it is completely and utterly unsupervised. It is an unregulated industry and the online space is unregulated. There are three levels that we need to think about here: what can social media do, what can Government do and what can sports bodies do. I put them in that order because that is the order.

That is the order of the ability to impact the problem. This is a social media issue. They have the technology. The primary responsibility is on them. Together with the rest of the footballing bodies, we wrote a letter to Jack Dorsey and Mark Zuckerberg requesting three or four things that we wanted from them. That is an ongoing dialogue. The reality is that they benefit from a statutory exemption from liability and so we have to make inroads into that statutory exemption.

That is where the Government comes in with the Online Safety Bill. It is incredibly important that that Bill is accelerated as quickly as possible, because until then we are relying on social media to do the right thing and, in the Teddy Roosevelt tradition, we have to speak softly but carry a big stick. At the moment, we do not really have that big stick and we need to generate it through the Online Safety Bill. That includes giving Ofcom the ability and the resources to act.

This stuff should be funded by the social media companies. They should fund their own regulation in the way that other regulated entities, the banks and insurance companies and other organisations that are

regulated by Ofcom do. It should be the social media companies doing this.

Sport's primary focus should be on the welfare of the players and the participants, because that is their responsibility. This toxic culture of normalised abuse has an impact on mental health and performance. In sport, we should focus primarily on the players and the participants. Wherever possible and wherever we have resources, sure, support law enforcement and social media in developing better policies, but our principal responsibility is to the players and participants.

Lord Moynihan: I appreciated that answer, Sanjay. Do not hesitate to follow up from this meeting if you have any specific recommendations that you feel would be helpful to us when we come to making conclusions and recommendations. Also, we have some people on this call who are passionately involved in the Online Safety Bill, not least Tanni Grey-Thompson. Do not hesitate, any of you, to contact us with your views in that context.

Sanjay Bhandari: I have been talking to DCMS today and will carry on that conversation.

Arun Kang: I want to add one recommendation. I know that Kick It Out is doing a great job on the incidence of racism in football, but we would recommend having something on the incidence of racism across sport. That is one recommendation and, of course, Sanjay made a very good point about social media.

We need to remember that the sector is close to 95% white, so the empathy and understanding of the lived experiences of many ethnically diverse communities is missing. Understanding the barriers and the challenges of racism and exactly how that makes people feel is not really digested by the sector. Black Lives Matter in the summer was one of the first times I have seen society come together. People said enough is enough. That is something we need to do.

I know that UK Sport and the sports councils have commissioned a piece of work called tackling racism and racial inequality in sport. Their report is coming out next month, and I think that will be a good pointer to what exactly is happening in the sector. They are talking to people from ethnically diverse communities across the sports spectrum about their lived experiences of racism. I think that will be a great point for us to give you some recommendations, so I hope we can carry on with this.

Q141 **Lord Hayward:** I will ask Arun in particular, but the others may wish to comment. One of the things that concern me is the failure to have conversations with sponsors. Many of the sponsors just accept bad behaviour and do not withdraw their funding and their support. I have in mind in particular Israel Folau from my sport, rugby. He made homophobic comments, and O'Neills, the shirt sponsors, did not comment. Arun, do you have experience of dealing with sponsors when they are confronted by racism, homophobia, abuse of people who are

disabled and so on?

Arun Kang: During Black Lives Matter, some of the large corporate sportswear companies threatened to remove, and did remove, their sponsorship on the back of racism. I think more organisations should be doing that. If we can improve through the sector, we should be doing that as well. It is important. It goes back to the purse strings. It makes such a big difference to sport and across governing bodies, but also to the sports clubs. Sponsors have a big part to play in this agenda. Since the summer of last year, they have started to knock on that door.

Q142 **Baroness Grey-Thompson:** My question has partly been answered in other answers, but I want to ask it more directly. To each of you, what are your assessments of efforts to get more people from ethnic minority backgrounds into positions of power and decision-making? Specifically, you have the sports governance code, but—Janett raised this—it is important to make sure that it is done with people and not to people. I am interested in what you think about the pace of change. Does it need to be quicker than it currently is?

Janett Walker: I am a big fan of yours, by the way. It is lovely to meet you.

The other day I looked at the five big sporting bodies across the UK: Sport England, Sportscotland, Sport Wales, Sport Northern Ireland and UK Sport. Everyone at the top there is white. There are a couple of women, but everybody is white. We have 15 national parks in the UK. The other week, as part of our Insta takeover, I had an interview at the end of the day with Richard Leafe, the chief executive of the Lake District National Park Authority, and all the CEOs there are also all white. They are at the top and usually at the next level down, and quite often at the third level down as well. Most of the people in the organisations are white. These positions of power are held by a very small few who are privileged, not just with wealth but in the colour of their skins. They have white privilege.

We get told quite often that we need to get more people sitting on these boards, but the systems for doing that so that us guys can be around that table are a problem. We need to change the systems. We need to change the traditional routes into those positions, which are part of a structural system that holds black and brown people back. Those routes need to change. We will not get into those positions and around those tables unless we start to look at the systems themselves. The structures of the systems are a big part of the problem.

The thing with sport is that racism runs right through the heart of it. We have talked a lot about football, but we are talking about all the sports here—recreation, grass roots and elites. It is all there and it is across the full level. The message that we are constantly receiving is, “It is fine to have you involved in sport when you are in your kit, but we are not interested in having you involved in sport when you are in your suit”. We are seeing that across all these different sectors. The point is that it is

hidden in the fabric of these sectors. It is hidden in the systems, the structures and the history.

As Arun was saying earlier, we had this huge Black Lives Matter galvanisation last year and it has really brought all this back up on the agenda. If black lives matter, if we really care, if we really think that that is the way forward and we want to make sure that we have an equitable society, we need to dismantle the structures. If we do not dismantle the structures that put black and brown people—people who look like me and Arun and Sanjay—at a disadvantage, it will never change.

It will get uncomfortable. It is incredibly difficult, but the power systems themselves need to change. Yes, we need to get people into positions of power. Yes, it is moving too slowly. No, there has not been enough real change, no flurry of activity to get a few more representatives in the organisation. If we are going to have real change, we have to go right to the root of it, and that is about dismantling the systems and the structures.

Arun Kang: I agree with what Janett was saying. As Baroness Grey-Thompson mentioned, the point is whether it is changing quickly enough. It is not. We noted that from the stats that we have at the moment. There are two things here.

One is that the environments need to be more welcoming, and once people come on to the boards or senior leadership teams we need to keep them, to retain them in the system. Janett has given some good examples of what needs to change. We need to look at the gender equality target of 30% that was put in place. We have achieved that across the board. We now need to think about whether we should have that for ethnically diverse communities and potentially disability as well. This will be really important, especially with regard to the point I made earlier about intersectionality. In my opinion, the sports sector and the organisations internally need to become more welcoming.

Secondly, we need to think about targets. We have a very good example of where it has worked with gender. If we are going to boost those numbers, we need to get the targets in place. I said “targets”, not “quotas”, for a reason. If we do not, this will just be a trickle, and we cannot wait for it to change organically because another generation will be lost across talent pathways and in grass-roots communities.

Sanjay Bhandari: I think the question was about what impact there has been so far and whether we are going fast enough. There is not much impact so far, but maybe there are green shoots emerging, a bit of optimism. There are probably a couple of reasons for those green shoots emerging, one of which is just a growing awareness and acceptance of the benefits of being a more inclusive organisation. The other is maybe anticipating what is coming down the road in regulations or targets.

The code for sports governance possibly missed a bit of a trick when setting gender diversity targets. At that point, it should probably have

added ethnicity targets, but that may well be rectified. Anticipating that that will be rectified, I am starting to hear noises from national governing bodies and organisations that are governed by or will be impacted by the code for sports governance starting to look for more ethnically diverse members of their boards.

For those who are covered by the code for sports governance, you will probably see slightly faster development over the coming months and years. It is those other sporting institutions like football clubs. How do you cover those? They are not covered by the code for sports governance, and other institutions. In football, with the FA and others, we have created the football leadership diversity code, a voluntary code setting representation targets at senior leadership and coaching on both ethnicity and gender. We want to see it, and we encourage other sporting bodies to do similar kinds of things.

I also bring a warning from the corporate sector, which is that there is a large, and I would say disproportionate, focus on board representation. Boards are there for support and challenge. They are not running the day-to-day business. That is the executive and you need the executive pipeline. My worry is that with this overemphasis on board you get two things. First, you get window dressing: I can stick someone on the board but have they really got an impact? Are we really going to listen to them and their support and challenge? We work with them for one and a half days a month. What is your ability to have impact in that role? Some can, some cannot; it depends on whether they are actually listened to.

The other bit is you create doughnut organisations, where they are quite well represented at the bottom and represent the external society. The board then, because of an artificial injection of talent at the top, is also kind of representative, but because nothing has been done with senior leadership there is this massive hole in the middle and there is no pathway to senior executive leadership. The answer to long-term change is creating pathways to senior executive leadership.

The other things are useful and important, particularly as they create these iconic role models, but they have to be part of a broader framework of interventions that will create sustainable change.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I move finally, and I am always sorry we do not have enough time for this, to Lord Snape. Has Lord Snape deserted us?

Q143 **Lord Snape:** I have just returned, Chair, sorry. It is Virgin Media. Virgin Media, despite the fact that I pay the bill regularly, always lets me down.

All three contributors have given us a lot to think about this afternoon, but if they had one recommendation they would like this committee to make to the Government, what would it be? Sanjay, I will start with you.

Sanjay Bhandari: I will keep it brief. I would say ask, do not assume. Move from a culture and philosophy of open invitation to understanding why that invitation has largely been declined so far.

Arun Kang: I mentioned earlier that, short term, it has to be targeted, and Sanjay made a really good point earlier about exploring not just positions at board level but exploring senior leadership targets in the sports sector for real change. Long term, we cannot get away with systemic racism, and we need the Government's support in exploring, focusing and leading on this agenda, tackling that organisational culture, their policies, their processes, their language and their unwritten practices. We need to get into that short term but the long term.

Lord Snape: I am sorry, Chair, I lost Arun's last sentence there. It may be the sound at my end. Can you just repeat that last sentence, Arun?

Arun Kang: I mentioned the short term, which is about the targets, not just at board level but in senior leadership teams. My second point was about the long term. We really need the Government's support in tackling systemic racism and focusing on organisational culture, policies and processes, and the unwritten practices that we know take place, not just in governing bodies in sport but in professional sports clubs.

Janett Walker: I agree with both Sanjay and Arun. The one thing to add, which is a bit like what Arun was saying, is that I would really like to see all the senior leadership teams and managers go through anti-racist training. When I say training, I do not mean diversity and inclusion and I do not mean equality. I mean conversations and going on their own anti-racist journeys and understanding what those systemic structures are. We cannot start to dismantle them until we fully understand them and realise that we are part of the problem within them, get uncomfortable with having to deal with them and start addressing them, tackling them and dealing with them.

In all those big organisations, the five sporting organisations across the UK, the national parks, the areas of outstanding natural beauty and everything else that comes in those big organisations start with the senior leaders, the CEOs, the chief executive teams, and move down the organisations and have some proper anti-racism conversations that will lead to proper change. That is what I would love to see.

The Chair: Thank you very much indeed for that. It brings us to the end of this first session. I think the committee will agree that we have had an absolutely splendid hour with you. We thank Sanjay, Arun and Janett for the frankness of your answers, the passion that you brought to your answers, but also the food for thought that you have given the committee. Thank you enormously, all of you, and thanks to the committee, too, for some really quite splendid questioning this afternoon.