



Select Committee on a National Plan for Sport and Recreation

Corrected oral evidence: National plan for sport and recreation

Wednesday 21 April 2021

4.30 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. 19

Virtual Proceeding

Questions 144 - 149

Witnesses

I: Baroness Sue Campbell, Director of Women's Football, the Football Association; Stephanie Hilborne, Chief Executive Officer, Women in Sport; Sahiba Majeed, Development Manager, Muslim Sports Foundation.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

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

Examination of witnesses

Baroness Sue Campbell, Stephanie Hilborne and Sahiba Majeed.

Q144 **The Chair:** Good afternoon and welcome to our witnesses. It is the rather strange world of Zoom, but welcome to you all. I hope that you heard some of that conversation with our previous panel, and quite excellent they were, too. I am sure you will be equally excellent, and even more so as we move forward. We welcome today Baroness Sue Campbell, the director of women's football at the Football Association—welcome to you, Sue; Stephanie Hilborne, the CEO of Women in Sport—welcome, Stephanie; and Sahiba Majeed, the development manager of the Muslim Sports Foundation. Welcome to you, Sahiba. I hope that I have pronounced that correctly.

Sahiba Majeed: Perfect.

The Chair: Fantastic, that is good indeed. The committee will ask questions that will be addressed to an individual, but for most questions we want all three of you to respond. Please do not repeat what somebody else has said because it gives us more time to delve into other questions.

If we start with you, Sue, it is a pleasure to have you before the committee. How would you rate the Government's effort over the last five to 10 years to get more women and girls of all ages, abilities and backgrounds engaged in sport and recreation and leading active lifestyles? We have heard a great deal over the period of this inquiry about the Government's plan in 2015 and how that has worked out, and about the organisations that deliver it. Looking back over that period, has a lot changed, or are we just kidding ourselves and it is basically the same?

Baroness Sue Campbell: My own view is that it depends where you look to get the answer to that question. If you look essentially at our foundation on which we all build, whether we are governing bodies or whether it is physical activity for life or recreation, which is our school system, I have to say that despite the investment that has been made by DfE, generally the provision has declined. If we do not get it right there, quite frankly everything else is remedial.

It has not been a lack of investment; it has been a lack of strategy and a lack of managed implementation. There has been a lot of money, but with very little monitoring and very little accountability going into our primary schools. Primary schools are a postcode lottery. Some girls have been given a better opportunity to get involved and play, but in many schools they have not.

Usually what people say at these times is that we need investment. That is not the case. We need investment to be monitored and for the people who are using it to be accountable for its purpose, which was the whole idea behind PE and the sport premium brought in by David Cameron just after the Olympics in London. It was to raise the standards of teaching

and the opportunities for primary youngsters to have a great opportunity to get a fun, enjoyable and meaningful introduction to physical education, sport and physical activity. I do not think that has happened anything like consistently enough or widely enough.

At the same time, in our secondary schools, we have seen time for physical education decline quite considerably. We have seen that result in fewer PE teachers, because you do not need as many if you are not teaching as much. Therefore, after-school opportunities have declined. I would not give that area a terrifically good mark. There is good intention and good investment, but poor implementation, and it has resulted in girls in particular getting less of a sound and reasonable introduction to physical activity, sport and physical education.

DCMS and the arm's-length bodies like Sport England and UK Sport have tried to do their part. Campaigns like This Girl Can and some of the work that Sport England has done have definitely attracted new women into activity, but again they are having to recover people we lost because of our poor school sport system. For UK Sport, pretty well 50% of the medals in the Rio Olympics and Paralympics were won by women—wonderful role models. You know the expression that if you cannot see it, you cannot be it. They are tremendous role models, and those are very good, high-profile moments, but they are just not continued. Helping people to see our best performers and recognising that they are just ordinary people who made their dreams come true is an important part of inspiring girls and women to take part.

With the Department of Health, I think most middle-class families know that the recommendation of the Chief Medical Officer is an hour a day of physical activity, but does that message reach all our communities? Does it reach those in socioeconomically deprived areas or those with very different cultural constraints on their participation? No, I do not think that it does.

There has been good intent and poor implementation, and I do not think that a lot has changed. It may have changed in small pockets, but overall we have not really seen the national drive that we need to see.

The Chair: That is a depressing start. Stephanie?

Stephanie Hilborne: I am not sure that I am going to cheer everyone up much. I will not cover the same ground as Sue and I have not been so closely involved in sport for as many years as Sue.

What I am shocked by, coming into the sport world, is the history of the exclusion of women from sport, the previously deliberate exclusion. People here will probably know about the 50-year ban on women and girls playing football and that my generation got detentions if they played it, but they may not know that we were only allowed to do the pole vault in 2000 because before then our wombs might have fallen out, apparently. The same was true for the controls on us taking part in the marathon and so on.

What we are left with and starting from is such historic inequality in the mainstream, particularly team sports, that to turn this around will take a Trojan effort, some of which is happening through Sue and others. When I look into it from my past background in the environment—the last time I saw you, Jim, you were a Defra Minister, I think—

Lord Knight of Weymouth: They were the good days.

Stephanie Hilborne: That was some time ago. DCMS certainly has the backing of government. Sport is certainly more central to the psyche of government than the environment ever used to be, for sure. I am really impressed by the support that bodies like Sport England give to charities like ours, Women in Sport, which was set up in the 1980s.

That is all really great, but if you look beyond to the Department for Education and the Department of Health into things like social care, or the lack of it, that disproportionately affects the lives of women and therefore the time that women have to put their own needs first, to take exercise, to play sport. The fact that, by the age of 59, half of all women have responsibilities for caring for an elderly relative will squeeze the time that you will take out for yourself to go for a swim or something. For men, the statistic is that not until you are 75 will half of you have that responsibility. How we as a society provide for social care and childcare, all these things, affects the lives of women.

Our charity has focused a lot on research and insights into the lives of women and girls, and these are some of the things that come out particularly when we look at mid-life women. Other disparities are the lack of investment in research into women's biology and the way our bodies function, the lack of medical support for going through the menopause, girls' lack of readiness for going through puberty, which for women is a far more shocking experience in many ways and can feel very debilitating. That is when a lot of girls leave sport.

There are many wider issues that really do affect the lives of women and girls. Significantly, if we have not built up bone density by taking exercise by the time we are mid-life, we will suffer so many more fractures in our older life, which not only is really rubbish and bad for women but is obviously a huge economic cost.

This issue goes well beyond the core departments, but I am impressed by the commitment of the Minister for Sport, Nigel Huddleston, and the people around him to women's sport. I think that it is genuinely there. On the Government's own input, we can come to what we think the Government could do at the end of the session. I think the will is there, but the cultural expectations and the gender stereotypes are so deeply rooted and the history is so awful that it is just a massive thing to bite off. I completely back everything that Sue said about the vital role that school sport has.

The Chair: Thank you. Sahiba?

Sahiba Majeed: I completely back that up as well. In the last 10 years, as someone who has just finished her GCSEs and A-levels, done the BA and been an undergrad, I could not completely understand what the system was then coming into this field of work, but I can now. I represent a field of women who are even further marginalised because of their identity. Muslim women are completely marginalised when it comes to these initiatives. There is not much research out there, but the research that I find and I work on shows that Muslim women, among other faith groups, are the least active. That could be for a number of reasons.

I looked at some of the data, and there was a bit of an incline throughout the years but then it declined again, which shows that the sustainability of whatever service is being provided is not there. That is quite imperative. I think that was in the years between 2012 and 2015, and onwards to 2018, and there has not been much structure for continuously supporting women such as female Muslims.

It is worth pointing out at this stage that there is a lack of research out there, and that while we want to find out the relationship between faith groups and sports and physical activity, different indicators such as ethnic background are used. However, the detriment of using ethnic backgrounds as an indicator is that it marginalises other Muslim females who may not fit into that ethnicity or people who are not of the Muslim faith but who fit into the south Asian category.

From that perspective, and I guess from my own lived experience, you can tell where the system has let you down. For me personally, as someone who was a complete amateur athlete and absolutely loved it but just could not support it because I had other things going on in my life, it was quite a hard pill to swallow. Having said that, I think that everything happens for a reason, and now I am in a position where I can empower more Muslim females.

I think that the new Sport England strategy that is uniting the movement—I have been in this field of work for about two years or so now—is quite a positive step, because it uses words such as “diverse identities”, which accept, understand and acknowledge that there are different types of women out there who need differently catered services. Sport England also says, “Providing opportunities to people and communities that have traditionally been left behind”, and I can vouch for the fact that Muslim communities, and especially female Muslims, have been left behind.

That is why I feel as if we are in a process now where the ideas are great but we just need to back that up with the infrastructure and the sustainability of the services beyond the next few years or so.

The Chair: Thank you very much indeed.

Lord Addington: I have a question across the board. Do you think we need a coherent central strategy from government to implement better

involvement? Yes or no?

Baroness Sue Campbell: Yes.

Sahiba Majeed: Yes.

Stephanie Hilborne: Yes.

The Chair: Yes, yes and yes. That was very good, Lord Addington.

Sahiba, before we move on, when I looked at the stats for Muslim women compared with white British women in sport, the stats for Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian women were significantly low, particularly Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, which by history are the poorest Muslim communities in our country. Is there a responsibility on those communities themselves to engage with sport and activity? How could that be marshalled so that you become much more effective pushing upwards as well as waiting for downward pressure?

Sahiba Majeed: I believe, and my organisation believes, in a bottom-up approach. You mentioned Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities often being the poorest. Some 95% of Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities say that their faith is Islam. We can say that they have a responsibility themselves to implement these things, but socioeconomic status is probably one of the biggest factors in participation. Once the opportunities are settled or have been prohibited by socioeconomic status, you can then only challenge the assumptions. That is exactly what my organisation does.

There are people out there who unfortunately use the cultural appropriation of religion not to do to exercise. However, if we look into the actual Islamic version of physical activity and health, it is an empowering activity that you must do to keep your body healthy. If you go by the book, physical activity is an empowering activity that all Muslims should be taking up. It is unfortunate that culturally modified interpretations come in the way.

Having said that, it is all about education and learning. Everyone is entitled to the way they practise their faith, but education levels and attainment in high-level jobs are quite low among Muslim communities, so maybe education about attitudes to public health and physical activity needs to be acted upon.

The Chair: I think that this goes back to what Sue was saying earlier about the education system. Baroness Sater, you wanted to briefly come in there.

Baroness Sater: I want to pick up on something that Baroness Campbell said about wanting a national drive. What would that look like to you with regard to the lack of progress and how a national drive could support a bit more optimism?

Baroness Sue Campbell: I do not want to go back to history, but in the early 2000s we had the same challenge with physical education, school sport and the very important school-to-club link. We created a strategy that was conceived nationally but delivered locally. That is really important. I do not think that you can control things from the middle at all.

It is important that the strategy is very clear about its ambition but the delivery is very local. We have an infrastructure out there of people at county, and in the old days what we would have called district, level. The district-level people are called schools games organisers. There is a whole set of people at county level who are driving the vision, but we need it all pulled together. We need to have a national strategy that defines what the roles and responsibilities of those individuals are and has a real advocacy about the importance in school of physical education and school sport.

I know that I would say this because I am passionate about it, but I think it is important that youngsters at 10 and 11 are as literate physically as we want them to be literate in numeracy. If they are not physically literate, they do not have confidence in themselves. They will not be as physically, emotionally or socially mature as we would want them to be. Therefore, they will not step into sport. They will hide from sport, which is what happens to a lot of girls at 11 and 12 as they start to go into puberty. They have not gained that body confidence and do not feel good about themselves. We know that literacy and numeracy underpin our learning. Physical literacy underpins our lifetime of movement, but we do not give it that priority or importance.

It is a national strategy with clearly defined roles and a real ambition from politicians to help people to understand just how important this is. The FA put its own strategy together, and we are using the infrastructure I am talking about. We are in 10,000 schools now through 150 networks, and that is working brilliantly. If we had a national strategy where we all signed up, every sport would do it. We are all committed to help. We all want to play our part. It is not for us about football, netball or cricket; it is about physically literate youngsters who can step into our sport, have fun, enjoy it and go on to play for their country if that is what they want to do. It is not rocket science and it can be done.

The Chair: Most things are not rocket science, I have found.

Baroness Sue Campbell: No, most things are pretty simple, really.

The Chair: Yes, they are. Thanks ever so much.

Q145 **Lord Knight of Weymouth:** I was struck by an article that was shared with us by the clerks from BBC Sport. Around the corner from where I am here in Lewisham is Goldsmiths College and the story of Yasmin Abdullahi founding Sisterhood FC and talking about the barriers she faced in girls' and women's sports but also as a hijab-wearing Muslim. That leads to a question about how intersectionality should affect how we tackle an

activity among women and girls and promote inclusion. I will start with Sahiba on that one.

Sahiba Majeed: One of the most important things when we are looking at ethnically diverse communities—in my instance, specifically Muslim communities—is that intersectionality needs to be the key concept that you focus all your ideas on. This is something that I have done my research in as well. We realise that, when we understand intersectionality, we understand the attitudes, the behaviours and the beliefs that female Muslims have. We have our own lived experiences and we can empathise with what they have to go through. This enables a culture of acceptance.

When we look at female Muslims in general and intersectionality, you have your norms, your gender, ethnicity, religion, economic status, sexual orientation and ability. However, when I was doing my research, one of the other things that intersectionality found for me was the discourses that often come with certain physical activities and sports; for example, the competition and ability discourses that are present in organised sports. If you are looking at a group that is physically inactive and you put them in an organised sport or in a competitive format, it will not gel well. It is an environment that will just showcase their inability even more, and that is off-putting. We do not then progress on to the lifelong lessons that we need for becoming physically active adults.

The other thing that we found was agency or autonomy, whatever you want to call it. If a woman, especially a Muslim woman, has control of her own learning, she is more likely to participate. Sue can probably relate to that as well. When we are in an environment like physical education, learning is taken outside your control, which can often feel uncomfortable. However, there is this thing called the PE and PA nexus, which means that the skills that you learn from physical education are often transferred. What female Muslims often find is that in physical activity, where they are able to control the environment and their own ability a bit more, they feel more comfortable. That is obviously really important, because that builds confidence, self-esteem and the life skills that you need to continue not only in sports and physical activity but in other sectors of life.

Lord Knight of Weymouth: During the pandemic we have seen some evidence that girls related to exercising at home and found it easier than exercising at school. Do you have evidence of that in the Muslim community?

Sahiba Majeed: Yes, of course. I will give you an example. One of our partners holds a mums and children fitness class, often for women who are feeling quite alone, women who are probably suffering a bit in their mental health and need a safe community of practice.¹ We found during the pandemic that even though our sports and physical activity were delivered outside and indoors was put on hold, sessions such as well-

¹ Note from witness: HappyMOMents (<https://happymoments.org.uk/>)

being sessions were more accessible for women who find it hard to leave the house. We have understood that we will always consider that and that it should always be available for the hard-to-reach Muslim women, who sometimes cannot even leave their house.

The pandemic has taught us the need for virtual delivery as well as physical delivery. Physical delivery puts faces to names to give a sense of belonging and to build an environment and a community, but online delivery is for those people who want to be heard, who want their voice to be listened to but unfortunately cannot due to unforeseen circumstances.

Lord Knight of Weymouth: Sue and Stephanie, I am interested in hearing your response. I also want to wrap into this question whether gender stereotypes are more of a barrier in disadvantaged communities and how we tackle gender stereotypes and other barriers that deter and restrict women and girls from engaging or sticking with sport and recreation.

Stephanie Hilborne: These are all such big issues, really. I was prompted by the earlier discussion to think about the data and the lockdown. Boys lost out in lockdown because they were doing organised sport in teams, which 20% fewer girls do so, we had less to lose.

It is brilliant that the virtual world has begun for a lot of women. It is really good, and a lot more girls are out walking, which is great. There are some positive things that have come out of that, but we need to remember that this team sport deficit is critical because it is such a life skills thing. You probably gain the maximum benefits as a person, because you not only get the physical literacy but you learn to take risks, which women tend to do less of at work, such as learning to fail, learning to let your team down, learning to be let down by somebody in the team—all the stuff that is real life that we have historically excluded anyone other than privileged women from. There is research connecting that to women at the top.

There is also an issue about the work and investment that goes into the design of public spaces, public leisure facilities, and the investment in leisure facilities that means they can be more tailored. I think in the previous session someone mentioned these really big glass fronts to swimming pools. Even as a not particularly self-conscious average white woman, I find it pretty bizarre that I am going on a bit of a catwalk before I get in the pool in Nottingham. It is weird. There is some really basic stuff that we could get right.

The public leisure facility provision is particularly fundamental to women, because the proportion of people who are swimming or doing classes in groups in leisure centres is higher for women. The crisis in the provision of public facilities hits women in particular, but there should be much more understanding of the diverse communities to make sure that facilities and the public space around them is designed better. In our submission, we mentioned Vienna's understanding about this with its

public parks, for those who are interested in that. The public park space can be completely redesigned to mean that more, rather than fewer, girls make use of it.

Where do you begin on gender stereotypes? We have an interesting programme, which was nicked from Australia actually, called *Daughters and Dads*, where primary school-age girls attend classes with their dads or their father figures in an after-school environment with other families. At the beginning, before they do some practical stuff and rough and tumble and kicking a ball around, the men are split off. They are put in pink t-shirts and are talked to about how they are probably saying things like "You're so beautiful" to their daughter but "Aren't you strong?" to their son. They are introduced to the very basic stereotyping that starts from the year dot.

The girls are emboldened to muck around. The testimonies from these programmes, which are run with football clubs, are so moving. Basically, the girls' physical relationship with their dads or their father figures is critical. It is the first time they might ever have done rough and tumble. The dads are saying, "Oh, I thought I might break her". He is getting a hug in the morning he never used to get. It is really powerful for the relationship. There are some initiatives that we could do to tackle it.

We are about to do some in-depth research on the exact issue of where this gender stereotyping is coming from that is so powerful. One of my staff, who used to run 100 metres for London when she was young, has a little boy of five. When she took him to the athletics, he said to his mum, this amazing athlete, "Oh, I didn't know girls could run"—literally, "I didn't know girls could run". That starts so young. It has not come from her. Where is it coming from? How do we understand how to change that? There is a lot more work to go on.

Sue will probably talk a lot more about this, but I think that the whole way we treat women in the media and sportswomen in particular in the media is massive. We know that about 4% of sports coverage is of women. I just checked today's BBC Sport website to see where we are at and there were—this is all down to Sue—actually two stories about women's football. There was one story about how you could not dream of being a footballer as a girl, and then there were 15 men's sports stories. That is quite good for an average result in BBC Sport.

This is not just about being visible in the media but about being visible in a particular way. Speedo recently got hammered for its latest ads, where the men's kit—let us not think too hard about men's Speedo kit—was called "Rediscover your race pace", but the women's was "Complement your shape". This is going on through and through. The BBC recently did some interviews with the women's rugby team to up the profile, and it asked questions like, "Who is the bossiest in the team?" This is gender stereotyping running through, and until we educate our journalists and empower parents to understand the indirect stereotyping that we probably all do, we will not crack through it.

We did some research recently with Sports Direct of 2,000 young people between the ages of 13 and 24. The bottom line was that 60% of boys but only 30% of girls dreamed of reaching the top in sport, which I suspect is higher than when I was young. With this lack of expectation we are basically stopping our girls dreaming that they will do this wonderful sport.

Baroness Sue Campbell: I will try to keep my answer brief, because I do not have a lot to add that has not been said. They were both excellent.

On intersectionality—Sahiba said it and Sanjay said it in your previous session—what we have learned at the FA is listening and understanding. For example, we set up an Asian women's group. You cannot put yourself in other people's shoes, but you can certainly listen and understand what that means in the way you present your sport to meet different people's motivations and respect those cultural differences.

Very simply, we have divided all our provision now into football for learning, football for fun, football for competition and football for excellence. Right from the early start through to our older population, including me, there is now an opportunity to play the game in a way that hopefully meets your motivations and your needs.

Even that does not do the job we need it to in some of our communities. The other big approach we have taken, as we deliver our Euro host city work that has now started, is a plan to target communities that we have not reached. Sahiba has talked very eloquently about that. We have learned from all our work over the last few years that to make that sport real in that community you have to develop leaders from within that community, not catapult people in but excite and bring people out, give them sufficient skills that they can go back as the leaders, the motivators, the coaches.

There is a huge amount of work to do. We are nowhere near finding the answers that we want to find, but I hope that through the work we do on the Euro over the next two years we will produce some good practice on how to reach parts with activity and sport that we just have not reached effectively.

Stephanie covered sexism off really well. I will go back to say, as you would expect me to, Jim, that you have to give youngsters equal opportunities to play, and that starts in school. It starts in the playground. I do not know how many primary schools you have been in lately, but it is still the same old picture: the boys in the middle with the football and the girls around the outside. We have to change that, and we have to make it clear that young women can and do want to play and can and do want to be part of activity. It is the way we set that up from the very early days, including all the parental stuff that Stephanie talked about.

In our clubs, many years ago—Tanni probably remembers it, too—we had a year of disability. Every local authority built a ramp to its leisure centre and thought that was it. They thought that was helping people to feel like they belonged and had a sense of being valued and accepted. A ramp is a physical thing. It does not make people feel loved, valued or accepted, which is the key to getting people involved in activity and keeping them there.

The final thing for me, and this is a big one, is all the social media stuff. We have very accessible role models. Our players in the women's game are fantastic at reaching out, being happy to sign autographs, engaging with youngsters. They receive some of the worst online hate and discriminatory abuse. Somehow we have to help tackle this whole social media reinforcement of what girls can and cannot do and what they should look like. For those who do achieve success, we have to make sure that they are protected by taking a much stronger line. I know we have the Online Safety Bill coming up shortly. It has to take a strong line, because the online companies do not take sufficient responsibility for what is happening, and so much of that inherent sexism is built into that online work.

The Chair: We have to move on, because you have opened up a new subject for us, Sue, that brings in Baroness Brady. Thank you very much for that.

Q146 **Baroness Brady:** Good afternoon everyone. Sue, I listened to you talking about social media and thought to myself that if we could sort out the facilities and get schools to encourage young girls to be active at an early age, if we could get everyone physically literate and eliminate stereotyping, they could get into sport, both in school and professionally, but then the social media abuse starts and that is a whole other barrier.

The BBC did some research, which this committee has looked at, that showed that two-thirds—65%—of British female athletes have experienced sexism, one-third have been trolled, and one in five experience racism. It is toxic, and it is very difficult to know what to do. I am very interested to hear your thoughts on what we can do to tackle it. Sue, if you have any extra thoughts, please add them, but I am really interested to hear from Stephanie and Sahiba.

Baroness Sue Campbell: I will let Stephanie and Sahiba answer this.

Stephanie Hilborne: I am not as up on the online safety Bill as some of you may be, but I recognise some of the issues around lack of accountability for social media accounts. The fact that there are still basically dedicated misogyny groups outside sport that are encouraging misogyny generally is pretty shocking, and there is very little clampdown on that. I wish I had an answer to social media attacks and trolling, but the answer will be the same as for racist attacks and all the other types of attacks. There has to be accountability for people who hold social media accounts, and there has to be better regulation of the providers,

for sure. It does not just start when you get to the top, though, as you will know better than I.

The other thing that we are really picking up on in the debate about economic inequality is society's broad lack of understanding of how sport can rescue girls from feeling really desperate in their teenage years. This is a slight diversion, but we tend to understand that football is great for boys from disadvantaged backgrounds who might go off the rails, but girls do not tend to set light to cars as much and cause as much police cost. What they do instead is destroy themselves. It is social media that starts to destroy girls now, increasingly in our teenage years. There is twice the rate of teenage girl suicide now than there was in 2012, and there are really shocking statistics on depression and so on.

Sport can help to draw girls out from that. Leaving your phone at home and doing some sport is an incredibly powerful way to strengthen the inner self when you are young, and that is when you are really building yourself. Maybe we need to reach back, too. One thing is to strengthen ourselves to cope with whatever we hit and the other is to regulate what is hitting us.

Sahiba Majeed: I have noticed something, working in the field that I do, especially when it comes to advocating for females and listening, whether that is through the media or social media. A few years ago, I did a piece with a Muslim jockey horse rider, a fantastic girl who was 18 years old and studying for her A-levels. She managed to win her first competitive competition. But in the media the narrative was, "Girl wearing hijab wins first competition". That spirals into a form of hate. There were comments like, "So what if she was wearing a hijab?" From my perspective, that was incredibly tokenistic. That needs to be avoided when trying to represent females in the media and social media. At the end of the day, this was a girl who was 18 years old and doing her A-levels, who had won her first competition. However, the headlines went to her hijab.

Considering how derogatory the connotations of the hijab have been and continue to be, especially for female Muslims, and any other form of religious clothing, journalists or the people creating these headlines have to be accountable for how that can spiral into hate. My philosophy is that if you put good out there, you attract good back. That is something that social media and media and journalism generally need to take on board: if you attract good, you will get good comments. But on the female perspective, accrediting someone just because they are wearing a hijab is incredibly tokenistic. It needs to be avoided in order to continue to empower female Muslims—especially, in my case, Muslim women.

Baroness Sue Campbell: I will add one very simple thing. If you can get the Online Safety Bill to be very clear about the expectations, it needs to be overseen by someone like Ofcom to make sure that the online platforms do what they say they should be doing.

The Chair: It is important that if any of you have anything to add on that topic, or indeed any other topic, after the hearing, you should free to

write in to us. Baroness Brady, did you want to come back on that?

Baroness Brady: No. I was interested to hear your point of view. I sympathise with everything you have said. I have been subject to it myself, as have my players, both the females and the males. We really do need to find a solution. Thank you for your thoughts.

Baroness Sue Campbell: It is shocking, really.

Q147 **Baroness Sater:** I am not certain that we have touched on this yet, but having you all here in very prominent positions and in positions of leadership, I will ask you this. What is your assessment of the efforts to get more women into positions of power and decision-making in national sporting bodies and other organisations in the sporting sector and across the whole landscape? You may have a list of things that you want to see being done, but what is your priority? Is there one thing at the top of your list that you think we could be doing now to encourage and get more women in these positions? We will start with Stephanie.

Stephanie Hilborne: I understand that our charity was quite instrumental in pressing for the 30% rule with government-funded bodies. I had not realised that that meant that you had to have 30% men as well. It is a 30% of one-gender rule, which I think is a bit questionable, and you might want to look at that. It is not really a worry that there will be no men running sport in the next 10 years. Anyway, it meant that Women in Sport had to actively recruit some men, which is fine; they are lovely. But the progress across business and in sport is interesting, because the FTSE 100 and FTSE 250 figures have changed dramatically since 2000, when it was about 5% women on the boards of FTSE 100 and 250. It is now up to nearer 30%.

When you look at the roles there are and the number of chairs there are, women tend to be in roles that are more about HR or finance and less about the big decision-making and the direction of the business. Similarly, in the top executive roles, we fade out a bit. In sport, again, I am not nearly as expert as some of you, but I have been really surprised to hear that there is only one female director of performance in the NGBs. The directors of performance set a lot of the culture of sport, so there should be a very active guide to make sure that 50% of performance directors are women. They are setting the culture that will also determine things like what happens in gymnastics in the future with the relationships.

This lack of women coaches underlines that, because obviously it is the coaches who will go on to be the technical or performance experts. The number of women versus men who are coaching is a profound gender disparity. I think we can start looking at the coaching and performance area, which is critical. Again, it comes back to things like childcare, time pressures, historic exclusions, the current culture and often intimidating culture on the grounds, where everyone else is a macho bloke coaching the kids and you might not be. It is a really interesting and complex thing. The technical performance area is where we need to drive to get

more women through, and then we will probably get more women chief execs in the big sports.

Baroness Sue Campbell: It is a great question, and there are no simple answers, I am afraid. I wish there were. I agree with Arun about the need for targets. I am not a great lover of quotas, but targets are important when we are trying to change things. We have made some progress in football in a lot of the areas that Steph talked about, for example in increasing the number of coaches. Fifty per cent of the coaches in our Women's Super League, which as of next year will be on television every week, are women. When I started, there were only two. We have seen a massive uplift in the number of women refereeing, and we have seen a woman referee an EFL game in the championship for the first time. We are making progress.

But Steph is right that the barriers are built into the way people behave. Part of it, in my humble opinion, is because management and leadership in the past have been built on male norms, because men have done it. There is nothing wrong with that, but when women come in and quite often lead and manage in a different way—not better, not worse, just different—they are judged to be less effective. It is really important that we understand that as a continuum of leadership and management. We know from all the work that has been done on businesses that where there is a balance in the boardroom there is better productivity. At the FA now, 50% of our senior management team are women, and there is no doubt that that is changing the culture and the nature of the organisation.

Again, I agree with Steph that it is really important with those key executive roles, whether it is senior management, senior people in coaching or senior people in refereeing, that we work really hard to get people up there so that others can look up and aspire to become that. If you look up and you cannot see it, it is very difficult to be it. That requires all of us who are working in sport to make sure that we design and nurture the pathway, so that, when that aspiration is set, people do not hit these barriers all the way along. It is fundamental restructuring of the way we work. I have been at the FA for five years now and I will describe it as an interesting cultural journey.

The Chair: You should come into the House of Lords.

Baroness Sue Campbell: I do occasionally, but not as often as I should, probably.

Sahiba Majeed: I believe that there needs to be an infrastructure that supports women—especially, from my perspective, female Muslims—through a bottom-up approach. For me, that means us championing and supporting our grass-roots ambassadors and help them to see their journey and to support their journey into positions of power. First, it is important to know that I am not a woman of position or power. I work for a very small organisation. But in my lived experience I have been a

woman in a position of power. There is this conflict that occurs. I feel that I have to share with you.

There is often a quota or a tick-list: "We need to make sure that our workforce is this per cent diverse or this per cent women". That means a woman and a woman of colour, and then questions: "Are they hiring me because of my talent, or are they hiring me because I fit an agenda?" That is the most troublesome. When I was 21 years old I was the chair of a sporting charity. I was thrown into the deep end, literally with no flow, and at every single meeting I went to I asked myself, "Am I here to fill in a checklist or am I here because of my merit?" Unfortunately for me, I could not see anyone appreciating my merit and I had to resign. It had a horrible effect on my health, but that is the experience that we females are facing.

I have friends and family who are independent, brown Muslim women in sectors that are either male dominated or dominated by people they cannot relate to. They face that constant question: "Am I here for my merit or am I here because I fit an agenda?" For me it is about organisations finding and showing that fine line between that and, "You're here for your merit". That will happen only when we have an infrastructure that supports our women, and when we have women who can relate to a similar experience, or an experience that is as similar as possible, to ensure that they are being really valued.

Baroness Sue Campbell: Well said.

Stephanie Hilborne: I will quickly add to that. You are absolutely right, Sahiba, that that really points to the fact that we need to go to what we call beyond 30%, which is the cultural shift. I think Baroness Brady has proved that you can make these changes if you have the commitment to it, but the culture has to be there too or you just gradually lose it and it does not have the impact it should.

The Chair: Lord Knight, I cut you off at your stocking tops earlier. Would you like to come back at all, just for a few minutes?

Q148 **Lord Knight of Weymouth:** You are very generous. That involves me rediscovering my flow. With Sahiba I touched on some of the reflections from the pandemic. I would be interested to see whether Sue and Stephanie have similar reflections. It feels, from the outside as a privileged white male, like we have made some advances over the last few years, but that they have massively stalled and even gone backwards in the pandemic in terms of the visibility of women's sport and the amount that has been going on. As I pointed out to Sahiba, we have also seen some uptake in the number of girls getting active because they were more comfortable getting active at home than they were at school. What was seen during the pandemic that you want to keep, and what has reflected back that we should focus on as a committee?

Baroness Sue Campbell: Thank you for that question. What do we want to keep? I think, as a professional, that we have found new ways of

working, which is good and has been very effective in some senses. I have missed my colleagues, but we have found new ways of working and communicating. We have launched an online programme for teachers, so that everyone can access it. We have launched a whole set of digital resources. We have our elite football women doing all sorts of programmes for schools.

What have we learned? We have learned to really use that online medium much more effectively, and I hope we will retain that. What we desperately now need is to engage again with people. As a different example, we know that not only have people from socioeconomically deprived backgrounds suffered most from inactivity, but so have people with disabilities. We were on a nice, steady rise before the pandemic in getting more young men and women with disabilities, and older men and women with disabilities, playing our game. Of course, we have seen that massively drop off, almost like a cliff edge, because of people's need to look after themselves.

We are starting a campaign next week to say to people who were not new but were already playing that it will be safe, and to encourage them to come back to the sport they love. It is not that they cannot exercise at home but, as Stephanie said earlier, there is so much more to being engaged in sport than just being physically active. It is about being with others, a sense of belonging, social skills and the emotional warmth and connection you have with people. That is about being well and what makes us all feel well.

Yes, we have learned a lot and we can continue to develop, but we need to get back to hugging a few people and playing football and whatever we want to play with a few people, and laughing and enjoying life with others.

Stephanie Hilborne: I can send a couple of reports to the committee. We did some lockdown research with teenage girls and a full diversity of adult women. The headlines are that the teenage girls engaged online but got bored quickly. The offer needs to be improved, and then it can be of value. It is stereotyped to dancing and all the things that girls have been taught ever since they were one are things that girls do, but it could be good. One thing that has also been really good is that teenage girls have seen the value to their mental health and well-being of being outdoors and walking, which is fabulous.

Of course, the pandemic has exposed the continuing stereotype that women do the childcare, and in the nightmare of home schooling they were normally putting in more hours than the men. That adds to the extraordinary deficit of what people call leisure time. Women have about one-fifth of the leisure time of men.

I also want to share the fact that the word "sport" comes from the old French "desporter", which basically means to get away from the stress of life. If we do not let women get away from the stress of life, we are failing women. I will definitely send through our report.²

Another positive from the pandemic is that it has lifted the lid on a lot of really systemic inequalities, including some of the gender inequalities. I feel there is more commitment as a nation to rectify some of that now than there probably was pre-pandemic. We need to exploit that opportunity to really change the system.

The Chair: Sahiba, did you want to have a quick word?

Sahiba Majeed: I have already had my word, I think.

The Chair: I thought you were going to come back there. That leads us to the Earl of Devon.

Q149 **The Earl of Devon:** Thank you to all the witnesses. It has been fascinating. We have had some discussion about what recommendations you would like this committee to make to government. Baroness Campbell mentioned the national strategy, and Lord Addington got you all to agree that the Government need a focused campaign on this. I will ask you in turn what specific recommendation you would like this committee to make to the Government, over and above those that we have already discussed.

Stephanie Hilborne: I have written down "Title IX equivalent". People may be aware of that as the US version of ensuring equal investment in each gender in sport. The more I thought about it, the more I felt that we need some form of legislation that, rather like a powerful environment Bill, looks at it across a number of ways.

Given the historical inequalities, government investment in sport must be more than 50% in women's sport. Some £4 million of the sport winter survival package went into probably our biggest team sport, if not our biggest team sport, which is netball, £10 million went into horse racing, £135 million went into men's rugby. The amount of investment we are making as a nation directly from the state is not even balanced, let alone balanced in favour of women, which it should be.

This Title IX equivalent could also begin to think about incentives or regulation to require sponsors to put more than 1% of overall sports sponsorship towards women. It could tackle the issues of prize money which means that women get nothing for winning the Six Nations Championship for rugby, but the men's clubs get £5 million, or the old FA Cup disparities. It could look at local authority investment and the gender balance in public broadcasting of sport. I know there is a discussion about a cross-government initiative on this, but if there was a Title IX equivalent, these are the sorts of things it could be actively tackling. It is not a short answer, but it is so profound that it needs quite a deep change.

The Earl of Devon: Thank you, that is very helpful. Sahiba, could you

² Note from witness: *Women in Sport, Lockdown Research: Implications for Women's Participation* (30 June 2020) and *Women in Sport, Life in Lockdown: The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Teenage Girls' Lives and Physical Activity* (March 2021)

give your answer?

Sahiba Majeed: Of course. I think the Government need to continue to support and invest in organisations. I will give you the example of us, because we understand where the pockets of communities are, and a curriculum that we are reforming. This is something that I would like the Government or the national governing bodies to support or invest in. We understand that although there are young Muslims out there who perhaps do not get the opportunities through school because they do not go to extracurricular activities as such, that is probably because they have commitments outside of school.

Speaking on behalf of the Muslim community, one of our biggest commitments outside school is attending mosque classes where you learn and read Arabic. We have invested in, and what we want the Government to continue to support, our mosque curriculum. Essentially this provides young Muslims with an opportunity to take part in physical activity and sports that they would have been missing out on in school, through no fault of their own.

It is about continuing to support tackling inequalities, realising where they are and how we can deal with them. Our organisation's slogan is "By the community, for the community", and that is because we have lived experiences of the barriers that Muslim communities continue to have, yet we understand that and we are culturally appropriate towards them. As long as the Government continue to invest in and listen and support organisations that are doing the work at grass-roots level, I think we can make a good and positive contribution.

The Earl of Devon: Is that solely investment, or are there some regulatory or legislative steps that the Government might take to support that programme?

Sahiba Majeed: It is a bit of everything. One of the most positive supports that I have found from the Government or non-governmental organisations is the new Sport England strategy, because it talks about the cohesion between community groups and that collaborative approach. It is that awareness of the collaborative approach and building upon it for the next 12 years or so that we need to continue to do.

Baroness Sue Campbell: As part of your national plan, I would want to see a real clarity in school provision and that we offer equal opportunities for boys and girls. That will require massive investment in teacher training to make sure that we can differentiate activities so that girls are not just left on the sidelines but are integrated into our provision. I know there is no chance of this, but I will say the words: I think PE should be a core subject, certainly in the primary years. I genuinely believe that if youngsters are not physically literate, physically well, emotionally balanced and socially integrated by the age of 10 and 11, you are constantly on retrieval. Those primary years are critical for the development of basic physical development.

If you gave me the power, I would put in some sort of national commissioner for this area to pull together DfE, DH, DCMS and Transport to have a really good look at how we make sure that we give the next generation the best opportunity to be physically active, to be well, to be happy, to play sport, if that is what they want, and to enjoy it, and for us to be a successful sporting nation but also a very healthy and happy nation.

The Chair: On that note, exactly at 5.30 pm, we bring this session to a close. I thank our three witnesses, Baroness Sue Campbell, Stephanie Hilborne and Sahiba Majeed, for a splendid afternoon. We have enjoyed having you with us. We have enjoyed your answers, and you have given us huge amounts to think about. Thank you all very much indeed. Thanks again to the committee, who remain with us faithfully till the end. On that note, I declare that this meeting is now closed.