



National Plan for Sport and Recreation Committee

Corrected oral evidence: National plan for sport and recreation

Wednesday 19 May 2021

3.30 pm

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Members present: Lord Moynihan (in 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; Baroness Sater; Lord Snape; Lord Willis of Knaresborough.

Evidence Session No. 21

Virtual Proceeding

Questions 156 - 166

Witnesses

I: Tara Dillon, Chief Executive Officer, Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA); Heather Douglas, Head of Policy and Impact, UK Coaching; Russell Earnshaw, Coach and Director, Magic Academy.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

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

Examination of witnesses

Tara Dillon, Heather Douglas and Russell Earnshaw.

Q156 The Chair: I would like to give a warm welcome to our witnesses this afternoon for this oral evidence session. I thank in particular Tara Dillon, CEO of the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity, Heather Douglas, head of policy and impact at UK Coaching, and Rusty Earnshaw, coach and director of the Magic Academy. There are a couple of announcements to make. First, this is the Select Committee on a National Plan for Sport and Recreation. Our witnesses are focused on a number of areas that we are considering in that context. Secondly, a transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the committee website. As far as the witnesses are concerned, you will have the opportunity to make corrections to the transcript where necessary. When asking a question, if members could specify the first witness they would like to hear from, that would be much appreciated.

It might be helpful to the witnesses to explain that I am standing in today at the request of our Chair, Lord Willis, who will be back in the Chair next week. I hasten to add that I am chairing not on merit, but for absolutely no other reason than that, prior to the appointment of the Select Committee, I urged the powers that be in the House of Lords to undertake this inquiry.

It might help the witnesses if I attempt to set the scene for what we are keen to learn from you today. We want to hear about specific areas where improvements in the key issues facing the workforce can be made; whether training is satisfactory and, if not, what recommendations you want to make; how safeguarding and duties of care can be improved and universally followed by the workforce; how to address remuneration issues, diversity—a really critical issue for us—and volunteering; and how we can provide a strong coaching framework across all sports throughout the UK, along with any other recommendations for change that you want to see.

This is an important opportunity for us to hear your views about the challenges the workforce and volunteers face, and in particular changes that you would recommend politicians and government make. In that context, and starting with Rusty, I would like to come to the first question, which encapsulates that background.

How would you describe the state of affairs in the sport and recreation workforce, including staff, coaches and volunteers? What changes to the structures and delivery mechanisms would you like to see? Particularly, what changes might we, as politicians, be able to make?

Russell Earnshaw: Thanks for having me and thanks for the question. I have written some notes down that probably go across a few headings. Where are we starting with? It is messy. People would struggle to see coherence. There are lots of different bodies involved. There needs to be more resource and support for coaches, be that coach developers, mentors, guides or whatever we want to call it.

I see lots of stuff focused on organisation—of course we need to organise stuff—and probably less focused on creativity and kids being at the centre. Perhaps we will talk about what data we gather, but I am not sure we are asking the people who are the end users enough. Having two kids and lots of experiences across lots of sports, I think we need to find ways to put them more at the centre of what we are doing. We are a long way away.

When I am thinking about coaches especially, I think of it like this. You control two things as coaches, practice design and then your coaching behaviours. We are way too focused on practice design. There are loads of good examples. One of the challenges for this group and for everyone is how we tell stories. I look at the amazing work that Emma Hayes has done at Chelsea recently and the profile that has given to an awesome coach who happens to be female. We have a really long way to go in that area as well. I feel like I am being harsh—apologies to everyone.

I guess it is where we want our expectations to be. Do we want them to be just okay? Do we want our kids and grown-ups to have experiences that are just okay, or do we want them to be inspired, excited and fall in love? I am assuming we are all on this call because we recognise what sport gives to us. There are a few of my major headings. I hope that has answered your question.

The Chair: Many thanks, it has. Tara, do you agree with that?

Tara Dillon: I do, entirely. I applaud Rusty's passion. It is clearly why we are all on the call. This Select Committee is looking at the future for sport and physical activity, and coaching is essential, powerful, inspirational and game changing, as is sport. The wider sport and physical activity sector represents a further 80%. A common thread for me today is not to ignore the entire workforce. Coaches are of course essential, but the sport and physical activity sector hosts roles such as cardiac rehab, stroke rehab, diabetes and obesity specialists. It is not just the stuff of sport, although sport is very powerful.

The coaching workforce is enormous. There are about 2.5 million volunteers in the coaching workforce. Some 630,000 coaches take a payment for coaching and around 17.5% of those represent the entire workforce. The fully paid workforce is nearer 600,000. I would really like to look at it through a wide lens throughout the day, not to gloss over or by any means underestimate the power of coaching, but to appreciate the wider workforce and the impact it can have on society as a whole.

The Chair: Can I ask you a follow-up question to that, Tara? You comment on a wide range of issues and particularly there you mentioned the health side and how that impacts on sport. Are you satisfied with how well integrated policy is for sport between departments, or do you think there is a long way further to go on that?

Tara Dillon: There is an awful long way to go on that. This is my personal view, but I know that I speak on behalf of swathes of the sector.

When you look at the power of sport and its impact on health, physical, mental and social well-being, as well as from an economic perspective, I am afraid that an integrated approach is woefully short of where it could be.

The sector is clearly not understood in terms of its wider impact. There is a focus on recreation and fun stuff that we can watch on the telly. They are very important, but we represent £9 billion a year of savings to the front-line NHS and about £20 billion a year in return on social value, in communities where people would not ordinarily access the more streamlined sports that we are all focused on.

In answer to your question, we have an awful long way to go. Again, that will be a thread of mine throughout this. The impact of this sector cannot be underestimated, particularly in a post-pandemic world, where we are looking to level up society, create more inclusivity and tackle health inequalities. I firmly believe that our workforce could be viewed as an extension to front-line NHS because of the impact it is having. Going to Rusty's point, it is inspirational. It is important for children, but it is also important for older people and people who live in deprived areas where health inequalities are stubborn. Our workforce has an incredible potential to unlock a lot of those challenges that government faces.

The Chair: We will come back to that. Recently, the Government have announced a new unit within the Department of Health and Social Care, which is to do exactly what you just said. Your comments on that later will be much appreciated.

Heather Douglas: To build on Tara and Rusty's points, in terms of the current state of affairs, pre pandemic there were 3 million coaches across the UK, coaching about 9 million adults and about 7 million children, and delivering excellent and inspiring experiences in the main. There is some way to go there. This is from playground to podium.

For me, the definition of coaching probably needs to be unpicked. Coaching is not just necessarily the traditional sense of the word, where you may see somebody on the side of a pitch. It is what Tara is talking about in terms of the breadth of that skillset a coach can bring. You separated out coaching, workforce and volunteering, but the skills that the entire workforce use there are coaching skills, so making somebody better tomorrow than they were yesterday.

As people emerge out of restrictions and lockdown, we have a duty of care to make sure that they can return, when they choose, to coaching and instructing, or whatever they do in the sport and physical activity space. We need to make sure they have the confidence and competence to do that and feel safe to practice. I could go into some statistics of the demographic breakdown of the coaching population if you would like.

The Chair: Yes, please do. If you could do it briefly, that would be great. I hope it will be useful.

Heather Douglas: On Tara's point about the breadth of the coaching workforce, it may be worthy of note that actually only 25% of the coaching workforce work in community sport provision. So 75% of coaches, instructors and physical activity people are delivering in many different settings and environments and to many different populations in a way that we probably never saw 10 years ago.

Some demographics: 55% are male, 43% are female, 18% are from ethnically diverse communities, 23% are from a cross-section of disabled people and people with long-term health conditions, and 35% are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Tara mentioned that there is a proportion of people who make up a paid workforce. We have the statistic there of about 21% of the coaching workforce, but only 8% of them cite that as their primary occupation, so there are other ways in which they are having to make a living here. Most coaches operate at grass-roots level, working with children and adults. Only 8% of people work at a regional level and above. That gives you an indication of the make-up. It is pre pandemic and we hope to repeat the study in 2022.

The Chair: You picked up on a point of diversity there, which is of importance to all of us, but not least to Baroness Grey-Thompson, who has a question on that and I think a declaration of interest to make.

Q157 **Baroness Grey-Thompson:** In May 2021 I was appointed as president of New Marske Harriers Athletics Club. In July, I will become president of the LGA in July.

Tara and Heather, you both started to cover the question on diversity. I am interested in listening to answers from all of you, though. We have heard some criticism about the lack of the diversity in the workforce, in coaching and in volunteering, and the pace of change. We are all interested in how we can improve it. One of the challenges is why it is taking so long.

Heather Douglas: I agree that it is taking a long time. I have been in this business for 25 years and we are having the same conversations, arguably, year in, year out. There are a number of reasons.

What comes first: a diverse workforce or an inclusive participant base? Generally, people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to coach because of issues of access to coach education and development, as well as time pressures, and are less likely to volunteer. There are a whole host of different barriers and some very similar barriers to different populations within this country.

It was once said to me that diversity is something you can count and see, but inclusion is something you can feel. We need our coaches and coach development workforce to be as inclusive as possible when they are in front of other people, to make sure that they can inspire them to take a step on that pathway and become a coach or an instructor.

We have heard from our participant base that particular groups like to have a coach who understands them or is like them. If you cannot see it,

you almost cannot be it. If we do not have a participant base that is diverse enough, and people tend to drift into coaching, how can we then have a diverse, dynamic, relatable workforce to inspire even more people across the board, again playground to podium?

Tara Dillon: You and I know each other quite well and I am a huge fan of actions speaking louder than words. We are woefully short of a diverse workforce. There are a couple of things that I will speak to positively.

The first is the Sport England Uniting the Movement strategy. It talks about inclusion throughout and its statement is an unrelenting emphasis on inclusion. Organisations such as Sport England, CIMSPA, ukactive and UK Coaching now have the ability to turn those words into action.

It is fairly straightforward; it starts at source. All education providers going forward should be able to demonstrate their appetite and action through workforce development plans, through educational attainment or through educational development, for a more diverse and inclusive workforce. It starts at source, rather than with us setting a load of targets. CIMSPA has the ability to do that. We can say, "All training providers that wish to seek endorsement and regulation from the chartered institute will need to demonstrate their actions for developing a more inclusive and diverse workforce". That is where it sits. I wait with bated breath.

As you know, the home nations sport councils and UK Sport have just undertaken some research on data collation and, indeed, lived experience from people in increasing diversity. You and I wait with bated breath to see the outcomes of that research. The key is to put actions into words. Workforce development plans including actionable processes is the way forward, rather than setting targets.

Russell Earnshaw: It needs people to light fires, in the same way as you will be, Tanni. There are a couple of good examples that I am aware of: the Fair Game project in hockey, the work Eilidh Gibson is doing in slalom, with Slalom Inspires, some of the stuff England Touch is doing. None of those is driven from the top. Of course we want to do this, but we also need to support, connect and highlight people who are lighting fires.

Sometimes we can get quite procedural on this and then it does not happen organically. By organically, I mean with a bit of support. There are three groups that I have had to connect up, because they are not quite sure that there are other people doing some similar stuff. Those are the things that spoke to me as Tara was talking about that.

Baroness Grey-Thompson: As a follow-up, should staff surveys and data collection on workforce coaching and volunteering be mandatory for governing bodies and any delivery body? Is that a way forward?

Russell Earnshaw: It is tough, though. It depends how honest people are going to be. Are we asking the people? Coaching is attributed, is it

not? Often, we are not asking the people who are experiencing it. We would want to get a picture of where we are. It depends how you ask it. I have seen lots of surveys that do not really speak to people. Of course, it is my bias, but how do we story tell about some of this stuff? We have missed opportunities to bring some of this stuff to life when we get this feedback.

Tara Dillon: There are limitations. I think the staff surveys that you are referring to are the ones that the tier 3-funded organisations under the code for sports governance are required to conduct. My fear is that they just tell us what we already know. To speak to Heather's point and Rusty's point earlier, 75% of coaching and physical activity takes place outside a traditional sport setting. Therefore, the reach of those surveys would not go far enough. It is about development plans, as opposed to completing, ticking boxes and hitting percentages. What you are going to do about it and how we will measure the impact is far more powerful than just surveying something that will repeat what we already know.

Heather Douglas: I agree with both. Data collection is important, because the numbers gives us a direction of travel, but we need to unpick what those numbers are telling us. Take one statistic: 18% of coaches come from ethnically diverse communities. That sounds amazing, but they are predominantly men and from higher social grades. We need to unpick what that is telling us and think about the lived experiences and stories of what it is telling us. The facts tell us what is happening, but the insight needs to tell us why it is happening and why all the good stuff is happening, but also the bad stuff, so we can make a change.

Q158 **Baroness Morris of Yardley:** That collection of data is crucial. I want to ask a bit of a sideways-on question, but it is about inclusion. There is one thing I have had difficulty trying to understand, as has the committee. The most excluded groups are those who do not like sport and leisure, so they never get to the point where they are in contact with a coach, trained or not. I am trying to understand why, whatever anyone does, given the best coaches in the world, they still do not want to engage at any level. It is something that I think is very difficult for all of us to understand, because we are all quite committed, enjoy it in our own personal lives and see the value of sport.

When you are talking about inclusion and getting to people, I take the point that, if they do not look like me, I am not going to get involved, but no one looks like them. They are all motivated by sport. That is a real barrier. I used to be a teacher and I always felt that that was a real barrier. The teachers who can really get to kids who are not motivated are few and far between. When you are talking about inclusion and diversity, do you have in mind the skills that coaches need to get those people who really do not want to engage at all?

Russell Earnshaw: It probably goes back to how creative or brave we are willing to be. I will tell lots of stories, so I apologise. I did a bit of work with London Youth Rowing and went into an area where it was predominantly kids who were playing cricket. They wanted to get them.

We created this hybrid game that was cricket and there was a rowing machine involved in it as well. It is about asking, "Do people have the skills? Are we allowing them to be brave?"

The other thing that is going to take over, potentially, is esports. If you look at the work of James Gee or Amy Price, who is a coach developer with the FA, and their stuff on video game design, it is starting to seep into education, slowly but surely. The reason kids are motivated to play computer games is that they have really good learning principles around them. We might need to reconsider this.

With some sports, we have held festivals and games that have been slightly different from what people are used to. The reality is that the world changes. We are adapting. If there are cricket fans here, I apologise. It is one of the most traditional sports ever, but they have adapted. They have The Hundred and Twenty20 cricket; they have different version of it. I work in rugby. We clearly have a lot of stuff going on with concussion and that, so we need different versions of the game. We cannot just say it is 15-a-side or it is sevens. We need to be able to go, "There's a kid who is 13 who can get all the way through rugby to 18 without having to tackle or be tackled, but can still belong".

I was thinking about this as Tara spoke about the financial thing. If we do not help kids to belong, they will go and belong somewhere that is probably not as good a place to belong, quite frankly. As you were saying this, I wrote down, "What is sport and what is the purpose of it?" We have kind of lost all sense of that. As Heather was speaking, I was thinking, "What is coaching?" We are all using the word "coaching", but we probably have some different pictures in our heads of what it is. I am not saying that is right or wrong, but we might need to revisit this stuff about what sport is, what it looks like and what coaching is. That is quite a big U-turn to take for lots of people.

I am probably an average coach. I am slightly above middle age, male and white, so this is a big change for me, because I have had 30 years of something that looks different from what I am now talking about. That is the challenge. I often speak to hostage negotiators, which sounds weird, but we will also have to change the mindset of a lot of people here. That is why I speak to hostage negotiators, because sometimes my job feels like hostage negotiation. We are not quite ready to move with this. I go back to this: what do the kids really want? We have a bit of what they need, but we have to be much more adaptable to that.

Tara Dillon: I could not agree more with Rusty. It is about creativity. The sector is moving. It has recognised that its image, traditional elite sport, has its limits, although there is a place for it. You just have to look at the name of the latest Sport England strategy: Uniting the Movement. It is about moving; it is about creating habits. It is about being creative in how children, older people and people from ethnically diverse communities can access a form of activity, as opposed to calling it sport. It is really quite off-putting. If you were not sporty at school, you are unlikely to form a habit of sport in later life.

The diversity of delivery is changing rapidly and, in my own experience of running CIMSPA, so is the creativity in developing coach qualifications, or in fact all qualifications: instructors, teachers and coaches. We are now looking at behavioural change. Gone are the days when I trained as a fitness instructor. I am brilliant at anatomy and physiology, but I really do not have a clue about how to change behaviour or motivate somebody who would not ordinarily engage with the sports sector.

Baroness Morris of Yardley: It is a different skillset.

Tara Dillon: That skillset is now really quite dominant in coach education, I am pleased to say. We talk about community. Going back to Rusty's point, what is a coach? It is a motivator. What is sport? It is an active lifestyle, as opposed to the stuff that I never liked or something that is unachievable or inaccessible to me.

We are moving the dial massively on that, but we desperately need recognition and support from government that this sector is making that impact and where it is having an impact. Stop viewing it through this lens that you and I are now talking about, which is something nice and elite that we see on the TV.

Baroness Morris of Yardley: Thanks. That is helpful.

Heather Douglas: I could not agree more. It is about the end users' motivations. Some people do not like the word "sport" and some people do not even recognise or like the word "coach". We have to understand their motivations, which might not be to play a sport. It may be a health condition. It may be to reconvene a community. That is where we talked about cross-departmental units coming together to look at how sport and physical activity, or the people we put in place there, can do that. There are millions of local initiatives out there, such as Muslim Girls Fence and Switch Up, that are not dealing with sport and physical activity but trying to reduce knife crime or change behaviour.

I know you mentioned, Baroness Morris, that you are from a teaching background. We have a power to create a habit really early in somebody's life of a love for moving. Tara is really right there. Movement is key, and sport and physical activity is just one way of doing that. We need to create that habit; we need to sustain that habit into young people and older people. If they have had a really bad experience throughout their lives, we need to change that habit through motivating them and making the experience what they want. Understand them, connect with them and stop saying they are people who are hard to reach. We just have not got to them yet.

We need to make strides to go there and make sure we can change those communities from within, because we know that certain communities have a certain sense of respect for people within their communities whom they need to trust. Sorry, Rusty, it cannot be the white male any more. We need to make sure that we can have relatable role models in

hyperlocal communities, not just geographical areas, that can really make a difference.

Russell Earnshaw: I agree. For example, Boing Kids is working with Sport England on reshaping the experiences of young people when they first touch on activity and sport. The other thing I would challenge our sports on, and I am not talking about elite, is that, the minute they have to make funding cuts, it is the grass roots. It is the coach developers. It is the people who are helping sport. It is the community rugby coaches. The other people who go are the psychologists.

The two groups that I potentially feel like we need, because it is helpful to be psychologically informed, are often the first people we get rid of, which I am pretty surprised by, I guess. I am not sure; maybe we need this money to support this. Does the game die if we do not get this stuff right? Look at rugby in Australia at the moment. It is dying at grass-roots level because they stopped resourcing it appropriately.

The Chair: I let that run, because we have had three of the most incisive exchanges we have had during all our hearings. It is really challenging for us. Effectively, you are saying that the structure we have in sport, which is a 20th century structure, is about sport; it is about elite sport and the rest of sport. You cannot look at an active lifestyle in that context today. You have to look at all the things you were talking about, ranging from esports to active lifestyle, well-being, mental well-being and education. The question then for government is how you manage that most effectively and what delivery mechanisms you put in place to deliver on that agenda.

Q159 **Lord Knight of Weymouth:** I just had to come back to Rusty with his mention of esports. There are some on the committee, I think, who think that esports are our enemy because they are sedentary and competing for time with being active. How should the committee be viewing esports and its potential to achieve what we want, which is a more active nation?

Russell Earnshaw: I do not know the answer and I am sure there are lots of esportsers on this call. I have not played a computer game this century. The way I would talk about it is that it has really good learning principles, so we adopt some of them. For me, that is like coaching. We cannot deny it. We do a bit of work at SGS College Filton near here. There is an esports company that has just invested in their campus and is starting to build stuff there. It is going to be reality. We just work alongside it and get excited about it.

However, as you said, we are often working against it. In the same way that, Lord Moynihan, I think you mentioned education and sport, sometimes teachers are presenting sport as what happens if you do not do your work. We are creating this division between the two. Sometimes I am coaching rugby and I am telling the kids it is a maths lesson as well, because we are doing some adding up and banking. I know HSBC is doing a piece of work on trying to connect up financial literacy with physical literacy.

Sports are starting to fight over kids as they have come back from lockdown—"You can't go and play football because you have to be at rugby"—instead of giving people this diet where they have more choice. We know how important a motivator choice is for kids these days. We know how important purpose is to them. Are we connecting people up and making them belong to some mission? I do not know whether I have answered your question, but I am thinking a lot about how we reframe and take some learnings from esports, definitely.

The Chair: I now know why Lord Willis asked for me to stand in for him this week, because I could not be a stronger advocate of the importance of esports moving forward and the relationship between esports and physical activity. Actually, it is on our agenda next week.

Q160 **Baroness Sater:** We know there are lots of different pathways. Are career pathways, including apprenticeships, delivering the skills and the number of staff and coaches needed to meet the demand in sport and the recreation sector?

Tara Dillon: The answer to this is, to coin a phrase, a game of two halves. In terms of career progression in this sector itself, the sector has moved mountains in the last two or three years to dismantle the old-fashioned, rigid, fairly monolithic route into becoming a qualified coach, instructor or lifeguard.

We have managed to deconstruct coaching to make it accessible to volunteers and people who are part time, so that the core foundation of coaching is understood and is common across all sports. Therefore, people can then specialise in, say, tennis, cricket or rugby, in a population or in an environment. You can now cherry pick as opposed to having to do the whole lot each and every time. It is also proportionate to the type of role you are going to undertake. If I am under supervision helping out the school on its daily mile, do I need to have the same rigour, regulation and qualification to do that as if I were teaching somebody to do wakeboarding, for example?

That deconstruction has been very positive, but I would like to come to the point of apprenticeships. I am afraid the same cannot be said. As a sector, we are pretty disappointed with the way the apprenticeship reforms have affected us. To give you some analysis, we were not a huge apprenticeship sector in the first place, but pre reforms about 2.6% of the workforce entered the sector through an apprenticeship. Since the reforms, that is now under 0.2%. We are not the only sector to be affected by that.

There are a couple of reasons for it, in my opinion. First, having just 15 routes identified creates its own limitations. Secondly, we are a largely SME sector and therefore not eligible for any funding in apprenticeships. We are also largely a part-time, self-employed sector. Therefore, individuals are not eligible to access apprenticeships or funding. Thirdly, there is a severe lack of understanding by the Department for Education and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education as to the

size, scope and impact that our workforce could have if apprenticeships and access to them lent themselves more favourable to our sector. There is some significant work to do there.

I welcome the latest thinking around flexi-apprenticeships. That would help our sector. In a similar vein, through perhaps lack of understanding or lack of profile, we do not even hold our own technical T-Level. That is despite, during the consultation, our sector providing a larger percentage of consultees than any other sector. We were still overlooked.

In terms of post-16 education, we are being decimated. Apprenticeships are pretty low. Technical education does not exist. Funding for further education is under threat. As a sector ourselves, we have come an awful long way in improving and making sure that access to careers is very much available, while, on the other hand, perhaps over here, not seeing the same level of support from government.

Heather Douglas: Tara has painted a really good picture of the state of play for apprenticeships and skills. From my point of view, if we deconstruct the skillset that coaches have, and that sport and physical activity can give you, it is often overlooked as a transferable skill into any occupation. If we think about PE, sport and physical activity, you can gain skills from that as a participant, in terms of teamwork, building confidence, resilience, failing fast and moving on. The skills from becoming a coach, a leader or instructor, about communication, giving and receiving feedback, planning and organisation, are welcome in any occupation, arguably.

It is often overlooked that, even if people are maybe taking a different occupational route, the skills of being a leader, coach or participant are really valuable as a foundation that anybody can take into their lives going forward. There are many benefits to that beyond just wanting to become a coach.

Baroness Sater: I could not agree more.

Russell Earnshaw: I was going to reinforce that, really. Degrees and apprenticeships are starting to adapt a bit more and realise that, probably, what they prepared people for before was not quite what it is. They are starting to bridge that gap. I would endorse that. We are doing, again, a bit of work, helping shape some qualifications. Why would you not include business coaching? Why would you not connect the two up? Why are we operating in this different world to everywhere else?

We know there are lots of people on here who have been successful in sport and then taken those skills and used them elsewhere. I would think about that anyway when I am coaching. I would want to be helping all the kids I coach understand coaching better, be able to ask better questions, and notice and understand ways of giving feedback, especially with the teenage boys, just so they can be good men when they grow up, quite frankly. Yes, I would endorse that.

The Chair: Thank you very much for those answers. Lord Knight has a specific question, not least on volunteering.

Q161 **Lord Knight of Weymouth:** I want to explore the career pathways point a little more. I am mindful that, at the beginning, Rusty, you said things were messy in general. Tara, what you said about the post-16 pathways being decimated was really powerful. Heather, early on I think you talked about how just 23% of those in the coaching sector were paid, so most would be volunteers. Are there sufficient links between volunteering and career pathways? In particular, I guess I am interested in whether that can be part of unlocking some of the diversity issues that we are concerned about as a committee.

Heather Douglas: I believe one of the things that we need to work out—there is probably a question of diversity again here—is about a pathway and a route to your passion becoming something you do day in, day out. I was lucky enough to take that path. I was a participant. I was a coach. I had very inspirational coaches and wanted to be one. I was lucky enough to be paid as a coach and then wanted to enter into a career to try to change the wrap-around care system for those coaches. I know many people who have not had that opportunity.

The difficulty is barriers to progression. There are routes to progress in coaching, so you can become the best coach you want to be. That does not mean you are going to Tokyo this summer. It could be the best coach in your community, on that playground, wherever you want to be. There is a big market out there for people wanting to make a living out of it, but we need to make sure that quality rises to the top.

The lived experience research we have done with black, low socioeconomic and female coaches shows that they are really well received until they want to progress. Getting into coaching is really quite simple, but when progressing to higher levels—again, that does not mean Tokyo—they are often seen or received with surprise, which is clearly wrong. Why should you be surprised that women, black or low socioeconomic people, maybe having a regional accent, want to rise to the top in coaching? They are telling us that there is some veiled discrimination in the pathway.

If you go back to some of the points we made earlier, the majority of the coach development workforce are men. It does not mean they are bad. They are brilliant at inspiring people to be coaches and helping them get into paid employment, but we need to switch up the make-up of that group. As Tara mentioned with flexible apprenticeships, we need to make it an attractive offer for a young person to want to take that step.

Coach education, coach development or transitional careers into the workplace are often very traditional, quite formulaic. It probably needs to be switched up when it comes to looking at what we can actually do. To become a coach is traditional, formulaic and quite time-pressured, taking a number of weekends out of your busy life, and then to develop as a coach it is even more so. It is very expensive, into the thousands, if you

want to progress in that way. To get a cost recovery on your personal investment is going to take a number of years.

Lord Knight of Weymouth: Are there such things as career coaches to help the target groups who can be identified as having the talent to be professional but need the help and need someone to help break down the barriers that you say exist?

Heather Douglas: Arguably, yes. It goes down to not just the coaches' motivation but the motivations of the participants they want to reach and help. Tara mentioned things like cancer rehabilitation. You probably would not call yourself a coach, but you could have a really good career being a rehabilitation coach, influencer or activator in that field, linking to the NHS and the Department of Health and Social Care.

In areas of high deprivation, you would need to look at the systems around you. Who is going to employ you to make a difference in that community? What is the thing you are trying to change in that community? You might not be wanting to just make people more active. You might actually want social cohesion and better attainment levels in schools. We need to match the skills and motivations of the coaches with the communities who need those people to make a difference and make that match as good as we can get. At the moment, we may be parachuting very traditional coaches into hyperlocal communities and expecting change to happen, and it will not. It needs to be a trust relationship, where they fully understand where each other are coming from.

Lord Knight of Weymouth: Rusty, what are your thoughts on the links between volunteering and the career pathways into professional coaching?

Russell Earnshaw: I have written a lot of notes; they might not make sense. Do we even know where the jobs are? For example, Nick Wilkinson has just set up a company called Just Coach, a little like Just Eat, which connects the two up. There is a guy on Twitter, Rugby Vacancies. Without him, people would not know where the jobs are. We have the two ends there.

The way we deliver courses and the levels is not helpful sometimes. I know hockey has been brave and gone away from this towards much more of a mastery and expertise focus.

Lord Knight of Weymouth: It is too qualification heavy and that is a barrier.

Russell Earnshaw: Yes, people are much more about getting through this. Also, it becomes a way of discriminating against people: "Must have an RFU level 3". Why is that? I know loads of level 3 coaches who are terrible. I know loads of level 2 coaches who are awesome and coach loads. I find it weird.

It would be different for different sports. If I were speaking about football here, there are probably more paid roles, but to progress in you are probably going to have to be from a certain demographic: you played the game; you are probably male. It also leads on to all this stuff about the coach development workforce—the group of people who can support the person who starts out as a mum or a dad coaching their kids, which is how it often happens, to stay involved. They give them the competence and confidence to stay involved and survive, quite frankly.

Are we creating those opportunities for people? During the pandemic, as more and more people lost jobs in this sector, we put on quite a few webinars. It is amazing how many people just would not have known the basics, as I did not, of how you would set up your business, where you would look, how you would price stuff, the tax implications and whether this is even possible. Is it possible to say, “I’ll have this normal job and I will do some coaching, and then I’ll grow that”? Even just having that information and, as someone said here, being able to speak to people who have been on that journey was really helpful. I would have been able to tell someone in five minutes something that took me a week to work out.

Lord Knight of Weymouth: Tara, widening it out from just coaching to the workforce as a whole, are there sufficient links?

Tara Dillon: I certainly think the links are improving. Traditionally, as a sector, as Rusty said, we have this rather linear, rigid levelling: “You can’t coach unless you hold a level 2, 3 or 4 qualification”. The whole education landscape is moving away from levels. That deconstruct that I spoke of earlier really lends itself to volunteering. It is more about a competency framework. It means that I can cherry pick some competencies that are proportionate to the level of coaching I am choosing to volunteer to do.

There are some real positive changes in that respect and a majority of sports are adopting that view, in particular football. Rusty just mentioned that you are likely to have played the game, et cetera. If you speak to Lucy Pearson at the FA, they are talking about the occupation, the role you will undertake, and the competencies required to do it, as opposed to it becoming expensive, monolithic and inaccessible. I have to become a level 3, almost an elite coach, just to put some cones out and get about on a Saturday morning with some kids, so the proportionate bit is important.

However, it needs a construct of regulation and standards around it. That is what we do. We write standards for the sector and anybody who wants to gain competency or professional development units, the CPD. That is what a profession does. It is really empowering for volunteers to be able to access that. It is really enriching for them.

Yes, the links are improving. With 2.5 million volunteers, we need to constantly revisit that and ensure it is contemporary. Digitalise it and make it available. You do not have to give up an entire weekend. This is a

third call on your time. I have a job, I have a family and then I volunteer on a Saturday. I have to give that up to go and do this rather intimidating qualification. It does not seem appropriate.

Going back to the esports thing, for the younger generation and future volunteers, gamification and using tech to inspire and motivate people to get involved is extraordinarily powerful. I feel very positive about the links to volunteering and career pathways.

- Q162 **Lord Hayward:** I will roll my two questions into one. Can I ask Heather to cover the first part of the question, and the other two witnesses to give evidence in relation to that only if they disagree with what Heather says? Then we will go on to the broader questions. What training and clearances does someone need to work as a volunteer or coach at a grass-roots club? I am thinking here specifically in relation to safeguarding for children, for example. Taking the broader question, should there be mandatory qualifications or assessment systems for people who call themselves coaches? If so, do you need a register in some form or another? If so, who would hold on to that sort of register?

Heather Douglas: Going back to Rusty's point to start with, he knows many level 3 coaches who might be terrible and thousands of level 1 and 2 coaches who are awesome. That is the problem we have. If we look at qualifications, training and clearances that are needed, it is quite concerning if being qualified, however you define that, gives you a sense of safety and credibility. Half the coaching population are not qualified, but it does not mean they are doing a terrible job. They are probably brilliant, because they have the right competencies that Tara was talking about, the correct behaviours and the correct attitude. You can hire for attitude and train for skill. You can give them the skills quite easily, but if you do not have that person in front of you it will be more difficult.

As we stand today, these are the clearances for, particularly, coaching children. First, you would need a qualification at a certain level in the sport or physical activity that you do, usually a level 2. I know we are trying to move away from levels. Secondly, you would need safeguarding and protecting children, ideally linked to the professional standards that CIMSPA have endorsed. Thirdly, you would need insurance and a DBS check. I would arguably like to see you have first response or first aid.

To broaden our remit of safeguarding, under the terms of duty of care, to span a number of other training elements, all coaches have a duty of care to their participants. How can we build up their confidence and competence across a number of areas that cover welfare in its widest sense?

Tara Dillon: I agree with Heather. The challenge is that, without some form of standards and regulation, there is a risk that anybody, therefore, could call themselves a coach. There needs to be an infrastructure and a system, which may include a register, but I do not think a register in isolation is the only solution. It is part of a much wider solution where standards associated with given deployments or occupations are

understood. “Minimum standards for deployment” is how I would describe it, and, going back to my previous point, proportionate to the role you are undertaking.

I think that many volunteers and coaches would actually welcome some form of registration. They have invested in good practice and their own personal development to make good on the promise we have all been talking about today, which is to make this an inspirational, motivational experience. There is room for it, but it needs to be part of a much wider, sector-wide cultural shift in infrastructure and systems change.

Sports take their responsibility of safeguarding very seriously. They all have policies and procedures. We are now being asked to undertake some research with sport, with UK Sport and Sport England, to look at the possibility and the notions of a workforce governance plan for the entire sector. That will also look at registration. In doing so, we want to find the good practice and ensure that that is consistent across all sports. While sports take it seriously, it is inconsistently observed.

Therefore, as a sector, we should have our own self-regulated workforce governance infrastructure, which may attract secondary legislation—I sincerely hope it does—in the same way that you see other sectors. The health sector has the Professional Standards Authority that oversees royal colleges and their own specific USPs, if you will. It is the same with the Care Quality Commission. It really needed to develop an infrastructure that was not restrictive but gave it a sense of regulation. It was sticking, “I’m qualified” or “I’m competent to do this and therefore I’m registered”. There is certainly room for it. Standing still on it would be pretty irresponsible of us, as a sector.

Lord Hayward: Rusty, would you like to follow on from the other comments?

Russell Earnshaw: I agree exactly with what Heather said: hire for attitude, train for skill. If we had a licensing scheme, which they have in other countries, it would include things such as caring, ability to build trust, caring about the kids, often the stuff that we do not value, and that is hard to articulate and maybe test. That leads me on to a couple of other things.

I speak about this as someone who has coached on a Sunday morning and who has two kids, who have had a mixture of experiences, quite frankly. I think we all agree that sport and coaching can have an enormous impact, but can have a really negative impact when done badly. Someone once told me that one of the biggest correlations to someone being in a gang is shaming at a younger age. Quite frankly, I see that in sport. I am often the only person who steps in, so my wife finds it hard work being near me.

That leads me on to competition, which is one of our biggest challenges. Generally, people are okay at training, but then we have this version of what we think competition is that is not helpful. It is me against you. It is

not me and you chatting with the kids, the opposition coaches and maybe the parents and saying, "What would be a great experience for these kids today?" On Twitter the other week, there was a club that posted its first game back after lockdown. It won 89-nil at rugby. Perhaps some kids do not come back after that and perhaps some kids who win 89-nil get bored.

It is quite hard to articulate some of this stuff. It is clearly hard to write down. What does a relationship and coaching look like? Again, I am concurring with you, Heather. We want people who have good behaviours towards young people and are trying to get better. As Tara said, people would welcome that, to go, "I'm doing all right here". It would make them feel a bit safer on a Sunday morning.

I am quite tall and I know roughly what I am doing, but I would feel really stressed and nervous on a Sunday morning as a coach, because I did not know quite what was going to be on the other side of the pitch. I sometimes would try to speak to them and be on their side, but they did not want that. Competition is something we need to consider here as well and what we think competition is.

Q163 Baroness Brady: This question is to Heather, to make sure I understood what you said when Lord Hayward asked you about the training and clearances. The individuals need to volunteer to work at a club or as a coach. You mentioned that those who train with young children need DBS checks, duty of care and a level 2 qualification, and I think maybe you said something else. If 79% of coaches are unpaid, who pays for them to get those qualifications? How much does it cost?

Heather Douglas: That is a great question. Maybe I should have been clearer about the voluntary role. Usually for the specific roles, if you have the lead coach and you are coaching independently, you are asked to have a level 2 as standard. If you are a parent helper who dips their toe over the side-line and becomes a helper coach, there is less restriction in that as long as you are under the wing of the other coach who has the qualification.

It is a long time since I did my qualifications as a volunteer, but they are quite expensive. In my most recent experience, just to be a level 1 hockey coach was £160 for about a 16-hour delivery. To move to level 2—I know we are moving away from levels—was just short of £500. If I wanted to move up to level 3, we are in the thousands of pounds here and it is a real commitment. Some coaches are lucky enough. They can access bursaries. Sometimes the club will give them the payment in kind, so they will give them the qualification or part of the qualification in return for free membership for their family.

There are a whole host of ways around in which coaches can actually do this, but the vast majority of coaches will have to put their own hands in their own pockets. I do not know if this is going off base, but, if we think about the Proclaimers song, "I will pay £500 and I will drive 500 miles just to get a qualification", when they are giving one hour a week to their

local community club. Is that really a comparable investment for those people?

Baroness Brady: It clearly is very expensive. Right back to the very first question that Colin Moynihan asked about the lack of diversity, is the physical cost one of the big barriers to people becoming volunteers and coaches?

Heather Douglas: I do not think it is just the physical cost. Clearly, that needs to be taken into consideration, because we need to value what happens there. The costs are often linked to an income stream for a training provider or whoever is delivering the qualification, so there is a return on investment there to that body.

In terms of accessing it, we know from our learning needs analysis research and the thousands and thousands of coaches who responded that they want face-to-face delivery. They like the blend of a digital opportunity to learn, but we need to understand that some populations are digitally deprived, so might not be able to access that. They want face to face, bitesize and time in between to learn, reflect and do. Rather than go one weekend for 24 hours to learn something, go the following weekend for another 10 hours to learn something and then be left to do it, they feel, "I've done it now and got my qualification". It is a 20-minute assessment in a very pressurised situation, often simulated and not in their comfort zone, and then they become a coach.

There are a whole host of enablers rather than barriers that we should be bringing into switching up coach development and education so that everybody can have the opportunity at least to give it a go and feel the value of it. A qualification is just learning. The assessment part is what gives you the qualification. If learning designed like esports is so addictive and engaging that you never want to stop, the assessment should be really easy, because you have that love for it.

Q164 **Lord Addington:** I am afraid the Baroness Brady has taken away half my question quite brilliantly. She did it very well and we got the information. That is all that really matters. Has anybody seen a model that gets amateur coaches on to a learning path somewhere else that we should have a look at? It is the case that most sport is done at grass-roots level. If you cannot afford to pay for a set of shirts without having a raffle, you cannot afford to pay for a coach. What would the one thing be that you would like to see, from wherever it is? Take something out of the air, a wish list, something that helps grass-roots coaches.

Russell Earnshaw: I will build on the last answer a bit as well. Clearly, Covid has broken some rules. We are having to do stuff differently and maybe it is exactly the stimulus we all needed. I work in lots of sports. I think hockey does this better than anything. It has a menu of learning. Lots of it is free and available to anyone. Some of it you can choose to pay for and it can get expensive, I guess.

We do much more work in their context. We go to them. We do not make them drive 500 miles and 500 more. We try to do more stuff in their context, just in time, get on the pitch with people and have them feel valued. It will be more blended post Covid. We open up experiences for people, so they can come and spend time with the NAGs¹ and the age group stuff. They can feel connected. For me it is about community of practice. I would agree: all this stuff we are talking about is coach learning. We want to excite people, to make it fun and playful, and for them to suddenly become quite excited about learning more and more about coaching.

Lord Addington: That is your one thing.

Russell Earnshaw: I will go back to something I said earlier. We need more people who are lighting fires. It might not be the people at the top of the organisation.

Tara Dillon: I would probably echo what Rusty and Heather have said, Lord Addington. I remember attending a hustings event when you were speaking and one of the questions presented to you was what it would take for this sector to be taken rather more seriously. Your answer was pretty good. You said, "Stop being so good at volunteering and self-funding".

Lord Addington: Did I say that? I must have been on form.

Tara Dillon: You were definitely talking about lighting fires. I remember it. It stuck with me. Going back to Baroness Brady's point, it requires investment. We should not skirt around the elephant in the room. Active communities rely on active volunteering. That is the nature of our sector. In leisure centres and gym facilities, people are paid, but many places where the grass-roots activity takes place rely heavily on volunteers and people taking up that mantle. Therefore, it will need some subsidy. There are no two ways about it. I would love to see bursary schemes available to all sports so that volunteering does not diminish.

The numbers in volunteering are declining. We need to understand why. The old qualification structure, which I am pleased to say has now been disrupted, may have been a barrier. It may well be the call on time. We see some evidence that there is too much red tape and bureaucracy now associated with volunteering. They have to do a load of admin work just to volunteer. I suppose they just want to go out and knock a ball around at weekends.

There are some pockets of good practice, the FA in particular, and hockey, as Rusty mentioned, where communities of learning are demonstrating the power of learning from each other and from your peers. Gone are the days when we have to send people on long weekends for 500 quid to do a qualification. You can access pockets of

¹ Note by witness: NAGs means National Age Grade sides, which are the England under 18 and under 16 hockey teams.

competency that are relevant to the role you want to undertake. Going back to Baroness Brady's point, that makes that more accessible. It certainly makes it more affordable. In many cases, it should and can be free.

We share in those communities of learning. Heather made a really good point. It is a bit like taking my driving test. You will not know that I am a pretty good driver until I actually go and apply my learning. Therefore, communities of learning and mentoring schemes at grass roots would be essential, to have people such as Rusty Earnshaw rock up on a Sunday morning to support coaches, sharing his experience. That is free. That is not inaccessible and it is enormously powerful. I know that a number of sports have adopted communities of learning and communities of practice.

Q165 The Chair: I would really like all three of you to be more definitive on this question of a national register of coaches. Tara said, and I will quote you, "There is room for it". Thanks to Baroness Grey-Thompson, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill will come before us very shortly. In that, there is a commitment, which was regarded last night by the Minister as a very high and important policy commitment, to address the position of power issue among coaches in sport and to remedy the fact that those coaches can get away with what teachers cannot get away with. There should be a tough approach to that and that should be removed.

In written evidence we have received, there are many organisations that believe that introducing a national register of coaches would be a significant safeguarding measure, not least because it could make checks relatively straightforward. It could act as a deterrent. There is the problem in sports of abusive coaches—a very small number, thank heavens, but nevertheless they exit, moving across sports and across locations. A national register could help to address that.

Politicians will be very focused on this. I am really keen for the three of you to be more definitive as to whether you are in support of a national register for coaches or against it. The committee would be more than happy if you wanted to take that away and come back with written evidence. We would like a clearer position than "there might be room for it". When it comes to debating this on the Floor of the House, Baroness Grey-Thompson and I, along with most of the committee, I am sure, and others, will be very actively involved. This question will be raised: "Fine, you want to do something about these coaches, but then how on earth are you going to trace them?" Surely a national register is the way forward.

Tara Dillon: To clarify my point that there is room for it, my personal view is that there should be a register. There should be a national licensing scheme for coaches. My point was that it was part of a broader solution of systems change and infrastructure for our sector. Portability and visibility of coaches is essential. We owe a duty of care to participants and parents.

To clarify, before the pandemic, CIMSPA under the direction of Sport England undertook a piece of research, working with national governing bodies of sport, to test the appetite for a national register. To summarise, the answer was “yes, but”. The “but” bit is, “How is it portable? Who oversees it? How much responsibility do we have? Do we host it? Does somebody else host it?”

Phase 2 of that work starts now. In phase 2, we are not talking specifically about registration. We are now talking about general workforce governance, a part of which is a registration and licensing scheme. How do we, as a collective, now come together and stand behind one set of consistent and understood policies and procedures that the sector owns, as opposed to it being done in 46 versions, certainly in terms of funded sports?

Consequently, the devil is in the detail. Is there a GDPR issue with placing you on the register, Lord Moynihan, and that portability and visibility? There is certainly an appetite for it from just about all the sports we have spoken to. It is also about culture, as well as adherence. My point was that I do not think the difficult situation of the very small minority of people who choose coaching for the wrong reason will just be fixed by a register. It is part of a much bigger infrastructure.

Heather Douglas: I would go back to the benefits that it gives to society, the parents, the children, the adults and the coaches themselves. You have spoken, Lord Moynihan, from an angle of managing risk, which is quite right. It could also be a platform to display and celebrate credible quality coaches out there who have met a certain standard, which we spoke about earlier, of minimum deployment requirements, which is a quality standard to coach.

I would want to unpick some of the devil in the detail. Is this self-regulated, so you join a register and submit your evidence? Is it monitored and reviewed by an independent body? We can have a register for coaches, which may be something, on a grander scale, like Rusty’s friend’s Just Coach situation, where you can find a coach that you need in a certain situation. It is down to the employer and the deployer to make those checks and follow up on those checks in order to make sure that they are the right person to coach in that environment, with that population, with the right intentions and behaviours.

CIMSPA has worked with Sport England to try to get underneath the detail and 46 governing bodies saying “yes, but”. In the worst-case scenario, there is a coach who is not doing a very good thing, who then moves to another sport, is then actively coaching in another sport, is found out again, and then moves abroad. There is a managing-risk element to a coach register, but there is also the celebration of quality, a Trustpilot or TripAdvisor type of thing, with recommendations. As Tara said, it is part of the bigger picture of governance. I would be very interested to hear whether Rusty would like to be on a coaching register and where his thoughts on that would be.

The Chair: You are about to hear.

Russell Earnshaw: It is an exciting thought. I would not want to make coaches homogenous, but we have a duty of care that is currently not being met. There are two live examples for me. I ended up catching some coaches tackling some kids full on, which was pretty weird. In the end, I had to contact someone I knew at the RFU, who checked and they did not have any DBSs or qualifications. How do we get to that stage where a club allows that?

At my wife's school, two coaches who worked for an organisation locally were both got rid of because of some stuff that was well below the line, and I know they are both in jobs elsewhere, which quite frankly is ridiculous. There should be a licensing scheme. I agree with what everyone else has said. It is a starting point. We should also be going, "You grow from this point". Some of the stuff that I read about is disgraceful and we can do something about it.

Q166 **The Earl of Devon:** I am aware we are short of time, so I will try to make this quick. I sense there is something of an intractable tension for the committee between making physical activity and physical literacy safer, and managing those risks, and making it more popular and expanding it to those who are not doing it. Rusty, you have talked about the mentor role and the inspirational storytelling. How do we resolve that tension? If we are going to make things safer, we are not going to make them more popular. Likewise, if we are going to make them more popular and take them to places where they are not currently, there is going to be risk.

Tara Dillon: I do not entirely agree that that tension exists. A safer environment is good for the popularity of sport. To go back to a point I made earlier, it does not just happen in sport. This is in the wider physical activity sector. Coaching does not take place in traditional sport settings. Maybe 25% of it does. It is in leisure centres, schools and community halls. In part of our research in the lead-up to establishing whether the register should be pursued, which is where we are now, 81% of the parents we interviewed assumed that we were regulated and coaches were on a licence scheme.

I have spoken to many coaches who welcome a licence scheme because they see the lack of clarity as a barrier. It is difficult for people. They are seeing fewer numbers, or parents or participants are being super-cautious, because they do not know they can trust them. In that respect, that tension is not quite as taut as you might think. By and large, it would be welcomed.

There was another alarming statistic in our research with the parents. Apart from the fact that they assumed we were regulated, around 10% of the parents we interviewed had, in the previous year, had cause to either call the police and/or social services to deal with an incident. There is no central point. They were unclear as to where to go. Calling the police or social services would suggest that there was a pretty serious incident.

Even more worryingly, 9% did not do anything, because they were unclear about where to go. We have a duty of care as a sector to put right those wrongs. It might be unpalatable for a lot of people, but it is the right thing to do.

The Chair: I will ask Heather to answer that question and give us one major recommendation for the committee, and the same from Rusty thereafter. Tara, you can have the last word on your one recommendation.

Heather Douglas: We are going towards the abusive side of the spectrum. There are a few lines between poor practice as a coach and predatory abuse. Some coaches find themselves delivering poor practice because they have not been taught how to do it properly. They find themselves in a difficulty where the wheels have come off their world, they have been suspended without judgment and they do not have anywhere to go.

We have a duty of care to the participants, parents and everybody else. We have forgotten that we have a duty of care to coaches, who are volunteers and give up their time, but maybe have not been told the right way to do it. They are often punished beyond their control because they have not actually had the access to that.

My main recommendation is that, for a national plan, it needs to be connected. As organisations, we are too often put up against each other to compete, rather than collaborate. It needs some clarity and not be cluttered. Duty of care needs to be a golden thread throughout the entire thing. That is from governance and policy decisions right down to the field of play.

Coaches, volunteers and instructors, whatever you call them and wherever they are, are the lifeblood of British sport and sport in the UK. You can open all the facilities you want, but, if you do not have a brilliant person inside that, you are not going to have any activity. We found out recently that 70% of the British public believe coaches and instructors can bring back sport and physical activity to this nation. They really will be the lifeblood to make that happen. It needs to be connected, decluttered and have a duty of care.

Russell Earnshaw: Someone once said to me, "You can't stand in a field on your own and call yourself a coach". It is about people, isn't it? You are going to have to invest in people, really. People who help the coaches would be the big one for me.

My one piece of advice is just to be really brave. We are really good in this country sometimes at going, "We did our best" and that type of stuff. Actually, it is a great opportunity. Covid has disrupted the world significantly and there has been some terrible stuff. However, it has given us a chance to reframe the importance of sport. In my opinion, this is the time to be brave and go big.

Tara Dillon: Very simply, I would like to go back to my first point, which is about recognition of the wider sector and the impact this sector can have on physical, mental and social well-being, the economy, inclusion, active communities and health inequalities. I have been in this sector for 34 years and I am afraid that it still feels to me as though it is viewed as a bit of a recreational activity and something we like to watch on the telly, as I have said probably three times now.

The potential impact of this sector, post pandemic and in the future, sustainably, on healthy communities, active lifestyles, improved educational attainment and an improved economy is overwhelming. To repeat some of those figures, £9 billion worth of savings to the NHS without any government recognition currently tells you the level of potential this sector has. We have worked very hard as a sector to put the key in the door. Government commitment to this as an agenda, so that sport and physical activity sits across Parliament and is completely understood as a force for change, societally and economically, would turn the lock.

The Chair: The Office for Health Promotion has the opportunity to do that.

Tara Dillon: We need a seat at the table in discussions on the Office for Health Promotion and integrated care systems. To reiterate, we could be an extension of the National Health Service. We are preventing front-line National Health Service staff having to deal with preventable and non-communicable disease. We are increasing activity levels in society as a whole.

More crucially, in the immediacy, the facilities that host a lot of these activities have attracted around £100 million worth of investment, which was part of the £300 million recovery fund from the Treasury. The second part of that money has not materialised and it has left local public leisure on a cliff edge. About 54% of those facilities are looking at closure. I would strongly urge this committee to use whatever influence it can with the Treasury to ensure that leisure recovery fund is extended as promised.

The Chair: Tara, Heather, Rusty, thank you very much indeed for giving evidence. We have greatly appreciated it. Thank you.