



# HOUSE OF LORDS

## National Plan for Sport and Recreation Committee

### Corrected oral evidence: National plan for sport and recreation

Wednesday 7 July 2021

3.35 pm

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

Evidence Session No. 27

Virtual Proceeding

Questions 216 - 245

### Witnesses

**I:** Jo Churchill MP, Minister for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care, Department of Health and Social Care; Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP, Minister for School Standards, Department for Education; Nigel Huddleston MP, Minister for Sport and Tourism, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

### USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

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## Examination of witnesses

Jo Churchill, Nick Gibb and Nigel Huddleston.

Q216 **The Chair:** Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the 27th and final evidence session of the House of Lords Select Committee inquiry into a national plan for sport and recreation. We are delighted to have three Government Ministers with us today, representing three major departments: Jo Churchill MP, the Minister for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care at the Department of Health and Social Care—welcome to you, Jo, and I hope it is all right to call you Jo—and the right honourable Nick Gibb, the Minister for School Standards at the Department for Education. He was just an honourable the last time I worked across the Floor with him, but congratulations, Nick.

**Nick Gibb:** You were just a plain Mr when I knew you.

**The Chair:** I still am to my wife. We also have Nigel Huddleston MP, the Minister for Sport and Tourism at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Welcome to you all. On behalf of the committee may I say that we are particularly grateful that all three departments are represented today? Our inquiry has broadened considerably since we launched, and most government departments have come into play at some point or another, but yours have gained most traction during the inquiry. That is not surprising, since the principal focus for us has moved from an emphasis on sport to one on active lives and active lifestyles, which is not dissimilar from many of the comments your civil servants made to us at the start of this inquiry.

We have much to get through this afternoon. I would remind you that a transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on our website and you will have the opportunity to make any corrections to that transcript where necessary.

The first question is to all three of you, but I will start with you, Nigel. We are very much aware of current government policy, with its strong origins in the 2015 plan, *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation*. We are very supportive of that 2015 initiative. What are the Government trying to achieve by investing in sport and physical activity, and how do you evaluate your success, particularly prior to the pandemic?

**Nigel Huddleston:** Thank you, Lord Willis. Good afternoon, everybody. That is a fantastic and important question to start with. How long do you have? First, the Government's strategy, as outlined in the Sporting Future plan, is absolutely still the driving force. It covered many things; it included sport, activity, mental health and a host of other matters, which I know you have covered.

I should probably say at the outset that we are planning on refreshing that strategy later this year, and your input, views and what you discover in this committee will be very valuable in informing that process. There is such a broad range. You are quite right: the Government's strategy and goal is to encourage sport, develop sport at grass-roots and elite levels

and provide the necessary support. The two key vehicles are funding UK Sport at elite level and Sport England at grass-roots level. Since their inception and over the last few years we have managed to do remarkable things with a combination of government money and lottery funding.

There are a variety of metrics and measures of success, but you will be aware in particular of the metrics on general activity levels, and the Active Lives surveys of adults and young people are pivotal in assessing success. They have shown great progress, but we all know that in this post-Covid era we will have a lot of catching up to do. I was interested to hear your phrase "prior to the pandemic". We do want to get back to the more normal pattern.

To be honest, activity levels and sporting involvement are a bit of a mixed picture. Some sports have taken off—cycling and running, for example—while others have gone by the wayside. In the countryside and in certain areas where there has been access to outdoor facilities, things have been okay and activity levels have kept up, but we have seen some major holes in inner cities and more deprived areas and within certain socio-demographics. We want at least to get back to pre-Covid levels and then go beyond them.

You also alluded to the point that there is so much that we can do here at DCMS, particularly through Sport England and UK Sport and our relationship with the governing bodies, which also do a lot at grass-roots level to encourage participation. This also goes to the broader spectrum of what we do in schools, which DCMS does not have direct control over, and of course all the activity work that we do with the Department of Health and Social Care. We co-ordinate very closely. The strategy that we will be developing, the update and the refresh, will involve multiple government departments, including those of my colleagues who are at this session today, but it will go much beyond the original plan. I will stop there. You probably have a lot of follow-up questions.

**The Chair:** Particularly on that latter point about working together with other departments, it was clear in the first strategy that you would work with other departments. We heard about the weekly cross-departmental meetings led by DCMS to discuss the implementation of the strategy, but we see no evidence that those meetings take place. There are no minutes from them, there are no objectives, and there is no way of evaluating what you have just said other than those two major surveys, which I may come to later. What has happened to the cross-departmental meetings? Why do we not hear about them?

**Nigel Huddleston:** I think everybody understands that Covid has knocked off the rhythm of business in Parliament and across the country a little bit. I was appointed in February last year, which was straight into Covid response reaction. That said, DCMS works every day through officials and very closely with Sport England on implementing the strategy, and every week with me. We also give the annual report on the Sporting Future strategy to Parliament, although admittedly that has been delayed this year. You are right to call out the need for greater co-

operation. I can assure you that, at a ministerial level, Nick, Jo and I—the very people you have on the call here—talk frequently, as do our officials.

I do not wish to find an excuse, which is very easy to do, but I do think that Covid has knocked the situation for six and that the normal rhythm has gone out of the window. That does not mean that there has not been a focus on sport and physical activity. In fact, I would say the opposite: given the numbers of people and the conversations going on between departments, I would say that the focus has probably been greater than ever. One of the things we will do in the refresh is make sure that the governance, reporting structures and metrics are a little bit clearer than they have been in the past. That is one of the things I have discussed with my officials and would welcome your views on.

**Q217 The Chair:** We have followed up the evidence, particularly on the Active Lives strategy, as you would have expected, and we seem to be finding a significant amount of evidence that there is a serious lack of focus on lower socioeconomic groups, on BAME, on the communities that are the poorest, and in particular on people of all ages who have disabilities. What we must not have, and I think you would agree, is a white middle-class policy. What is your response to those statistics?

**Nigel Huddleston:** I see the stats, and they cause me concern and alarm as well. You are right; we have seen a widening of the gap in sport, activity and participation during Covid, and that concerns me greatly. There have been various initiatives with a particular focus on the very groups that you mention through Sport England investment during Covid and to help with the recovery. Precisely the groups that you mention have had particular focus for money and attention. I think you have spoken to Tim Hollingsworth about this.

Money can only do so many things. There are broader questions at play here about culture, parental responsibilities and what we do in schools. On the question of providing access to sport and the focus on sport, action was taken with Sport England's admittedly limited budget to target money with greater focus specifically on those demographics. There will never be enough money to do everything we want to do, but we are not blind to the areas of concern that you have identified. We have put more money into them. You will have seen the focus in Sport England's forward strategy also working to identify the very groups that you have mentioned and to see how we can work more closely with them.

I will not pretend for one minute that it is job done. We have a lot of work to do, but it would be unfair—not that you were doing that—to characterise us as not having noticed and not having done anything. We have noticed, and we have taken action and have focused money there.

**Q218 The Chair:** Thank you very much, Nigel. Jo, can you say whether the Healthy Living initiative, which is one of the things that has emerged recently, is a broader government strategy or a departmental initiative? How would you evaluate its success? What would success look like for you?

**Jo Churchill:** First, we know that this pandemic has hit those who have less access to services and less ability to exercise and so on. The department's key focus has been on making sure that a key part of our response is to enable people to take exercise in the easiest way possible, if you see what I mean. That was part of the response throughout the pandemic. I would argue that the need for people to keep fit, to build activity into their lives and to ensure that they keep active has driven some of the actions that we have taken. I work very closely with the CMO, and I am sure you will come on to the Office for Health Promotion, but obviously that drives right into the heart of health inequalities and what you were discussing with Nigel, because it is only through addressing the different and hard-to-reach groups that we know we can start to help to level up.

It is not always possible to give people access to all facilities on their doorsteps, but it is possible to give people the ability to take more control over their own well-being and activity levels, and we have done this through the use of the Better Health app and so on. We have charged ourselves with doing that. We know that underrepresented groups have had a greater decline in physical activity, we know that women and girls have had a greater decline in physical activity than men and boys, we know that there has been a greater decline in certain areas. What we set out to do in the action plan back then has coloured how we have tried to respond through the pandemic and what we have done so far to make sure that we can encourage people to take exercise, where that has been possible.

There were very few instructions in which some daily exercise was not encouraged, apart from when we were under complete lockdown, because only by understanding will we encourage families—families were often locked down together—to enable themselves to take on a more active lifestyle. We know that the major challenge and the one modifiable factor throughout the Covid pandemic was obesity. It was throughout the statistics. The healthier people are, the more resilient they are. We have been working on building policies in order that we can make sure that we help people to help themselves.

We also know that in a family where adults have good levels of activity and have a healthier, more balanced diet and so on, those good levels of behaviour and that ability just to stay well and stay resilient, no matter what else is going on in your life, enable you to fight disease more proactively.

Q219 **The Chair:** We will come back to one or two of those things later, but I want to bring Nick in. Does your department evaluate school games, school sport and activity action plans? If so, how do you judge success?

**Nick Gibb:** We rely on the activity surveys, which show that 45% of children are active for an average of 60 minutes a day. We know that probably 30% of children are doing less than that average.<sup>1</sup> We do not

have a separate evaluation, but we do look very carefully at those sorts of surveys to see how successful the action taken under that plan has been.

We have also looked at the PE and sport premium, which is a very significant sum of money. I am sure you will come back to that.

**The Chair:** We are coming back to that.

**Nick Gibb:** On the evaluation point, we looked at the impact of doubling the premium from £160 million to £320 million back in 2017. In 2018, we carried out a survey of about 1,000 primary schools which showed that levels of competitive sport were increasing as a result of the premium and showed an increase in the proportion of children doing at least 30 minutes of exercise a day. Teacher knowledge and confidence also rose as a consequence of the premium. We evaluate those surveys on the premium, as well as the Active Lives children's survey.

Q220 **Lord Hayward:** This question is to Jo specifically. As far as I can see, the Government are not achieving anything in relation to the group of people who are inactive and were not achieving anything before Covid. You said that we have set out to do X and that the children of adults who are active also tend to be active, but I am not convinced that we are achieving anything—we are possibly going backwards—with the people who have no level of activity. Can you point to anything that says that you are turning the corner with the great inactive community?

**Jo Churchill:** I would point you to the NHS app, which we launched during the pandemic and which has had downloads in the hundreds of thousands, and the whole Better Health campaign to encourage and help people to get active and stay active. I would also point to some of the work that I have done with colleagues on this call. Nigel and I discussed the importance of getting the parkruns up and running. They are easily accessible, although not to all communities, I grant you.

One of the key things that we have been looking at are health incentives, where you set up schemes that reward people for getting healthier; I have been talking to Health Ministers in Singapore because they use them effectively. As luck would have it, that consultation is being launched today. The Government have Sir Keith Mills of Air Miles helping with this particular incentive scheme.

We have to think differently. As you quite rightly said, we have people who have been inactive for a long time. We need to know what will help to drive behaviour change for them, because we know that high levels of inactivity and carrying too much weight are the antecedents of many musculoskeletal disorders and many illnesses. The combination of those

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<sup>1</sup> Note by witness: 30% refers to the proportion of children and young people doing less than an average of 30 active mins a day according to [Sport England's Active Lives Children and Young People Survey](#).

factors not only makes our population less resilient, but affects quality-adjusted life years for the individual.

We know that the medical profession tries to encourage people to get just a little bit more active prior to going in for an operation. We have long waiting lists of people waiting for elective surgery. If we can work on prehabilitation and getting people a little bit fitter, a little bit more active, we need to do it, in whatever way it takes. We need to increase activity levels.

Apps such as Public Health England's Active 10 and Couch to 5K help people to do more. All these initiatives have been out there, but we still will not get to everybody. The incentive-driven approach might capture a few more, which is why we are trying the pilots that have been announced today. I do not think anything is off the table. We want to be a fit and healthy nation, so we have to work very hard across government to make sure that we achieve it.

Q221 **Baroness Sater:** Thank you very much, Ministers, for being with us today. The committee has heard that local authorities are not involved in the strategic planning of sport and recreation policy. The LGA told the committee that local authorities put £1 billion a year into the sector, but that the DCMS does not seem interested in working with councils at a strategic level. How would you respond to that? I direct that question to you, Nigel, initially.

**Nigel Huddleston:** We do engage with local authorities. I have had conversations with the LGA and welcome hearing what it has to say, so I am somewhat disappointed to hear that comment. We will certainly be engaging with them on the Sporting Future refresh.

However, there is a role for central government here as well as a role for local government. I am a former councillor, and I think we all need to recognise and respect different layers of government responsibilities and duties, as well as the differences in the way councils choose to prioritise spending their money and what they focus on. I have a very strong intent to make sure that we engage local authorities, because I am well aware that although there are certain levers that I can pull here at DCMS, as those of you with experience at DCMS will know—and there are many of you on this call—we are not a big spending department. We do not have huge amounts of cash. We distribute our money through arm's-length bodies and work with governing bodies, but there are not many direct levers.

Local authorities, through the provision of sports facilities—I am sure we will come on to this later—play an absolutely pivotal role on the ground delivering the things that we want to achieve. I certainly want to work closely with them. I was somewhat disappointed to hear that, but it is not our strategic intent to exclude them—quite the opposite. I am more than happy to engage. I have had calls with many members of the LGA at a regional, individual and LGA level and will happily increase that, particularly as we recover from Covid and set the longer-term strategy.

**Nick Gibb:** Many of our funding programmes are delivered through the 42 active partnerships at local level. We rely very much on local knowledge and local activity. There is a classic example: the £10.1 million fund that we have provided to open up school facilities, and the actions, are administered through the 42 active partnerships.

Q222 **Lord Addington:** Does the Department for Health say, "Please co-ordinate stuff"? I had jotted down walking and the health benefits from it, but you need local government. Environment and the departments that are not here. With Environment, you have just had the farmers going through. Where would you push people to get that entry-level stuff going? Hopefully it will not take half an hour to answer.

**Jo Churchill:** I do not know if that was a dig. I will try to be as pithy as possible.

**The Chair:** I am sure it was not, Jo. Just carry on.

**Jo Churchill:** I agree with you. We work with MHCLG and through directors of public health, who have been very much at the forefront during the Covid crisis. They will play an integral role in the new Office for Health Promotion, with CCGs and the new ICSs, on having a joined-up approach from councils and healthcare. I work very closely with Rebecca Pow in Defra, and in the recent past we have launched green prescribing to encourage people who want to find their way back into work and a healthier way of living to use the social prescribing route of volunteering and so on. I have also worked with Rebecca Pow on a range of other things.

I am trying to think of a department I do not work with, Lord Addington. On drug addiction and addiction strategy I work very closely with the Home Office. I think you have just articulated both the challenge and the opportunity. I agree with Nigel Huddleston that we work very closely with our colleagues in local government, because that is the only way we could have managed to get through the past 15 months. We know it is possible and we can just do a little bit more.

**Lord Addington:** Thank you. That is what I was after.

Q223 **Lord Moynihan:** Good afternoon. Jo, congratulations on the impending launch of the Office for Health Promotion. Expectations from many people who have made representations to the committee are very high. It was interesting to note that in the House of Lords yesterday your Minister said that he hoped it would have "an enormous impact". How confident can we be that this new office will have the leadership in government that is necessary to co-ordinate across departments and be accountable to Parliament for that leadership?

There is a concern that it may not have sufficient resources to meet its goals, as set out in the original press release, to see action across government to improve the nation's health by tackling obesity and mental health and promoting physical activity. There is a concern that there may be a danger of the office losing its impact by becoming lost in



departmental silos, schools, local authorities, clubs—what we have been talking about already today. What confidence can you give us about the future launch and operation of the new Office for Health Promotion?

**Jo Churchill:** I do not think I am breaking any confidences to say that we had that internal discussion about where it is best placed—inside or outside the department? The CMO has provided impartial expert judgment throughout the pandemic and he will continue to provide professional leadership at the front of the Office for Health Promotion, while Ministers will remain in charge of and responsible for policy decisions. The office will be jointly led by a DG reporting to the Permanent Secretary here in the department, and we will have our own deputy chief medical officer reporting in to the CMO.

The ambitions of the office are very broad and very necessary. I would gently say that the Office for Health Promotion is separate from the UKHSA, which is very much about dealing with more of the Porton Down expertise and the expertise on testing, vaccines and test and trace, which sit on that side of things. We are very focused on prevention and health improvement and driving those things through right across the big issues.

Obesity and nutrition are key—two out of five children going into primary school and three out of five children coming out are overweight or obese—as is physical activity and trying to drive that into communities where we know we need to have more impact, making sure that we encourage more girls to keep active through their teenage years when they tend to drop away.

There is also alcohol, tobacco, drugs, sexual health, children and young people's public health. Across these issues, expert advice from PHE will come into the department, but more broadly it will help to drive policy development. Hopefully that policy development will start to get into every department—whether we are building a home, providing an education, making a job or providing recreation in other ways—through culture, making them think health first, and asking how we can encourage people to take a healthy option as their default choice, so that it is more informed, more effective, more joined up.

Q224 **Lord Moynihan:** Jo, that is an outstanding and comprehensive answer. It covers so many activities, and it sounded very similar to what the New Zealand Minister of Finance who gave evidence to us said. He talked about his well-being budget, which covers all those activities. How can we be confident, therefore, with such a large agenda across government, that it will be adequately staffed, funded and resourced to meet the very objectives you have just set out?

**Jo Churchill:** On the staffing front, staff from Public Health England will be coming into the department and working with our own policy officials to further drive the objectives that I just outlined. We have committed to ensuring that the funding is there to make sure that we fulfil this important agenda. On specifics, there is a tobacco strategy; a sexual health strategy; part 2 of Dame Carol Black's independent review of

drugs, which is awaited with expectation; and Henry Dimbleby's national food strategy part 2. All those things will play into how we seek to make sure that needs at the SR are fully committed to delivering on those strategies.

Q225 **Lord Moynihan:** That is useful internally, but one final question that has come up regularly already today is about the cross-departmental considerations here. This is massively important to Nigel, to Sport England. It is extremely important to Nick in terms of education policy and the relationship between education and hard-to-reach groups and local authorities. Lord Bethell mentioned yesterday that the office will work through local authorities.

We would argue that there is a major and important issue to be considered, which we would like your response on. Will you do something to stop it being embedded in silos and to ensure that there is a structure in place that is visible, which the public is aware of and that brings you all together under the leadership of the Office for Health Promotion to meet all the departmental interests?

**Jo Churchill:** The department is live on 1 October. Sitting here today I can say that it is a priority of the Prime Minister to make sure that we are pooling the expertise in the health department and that things are all under consideration, given the SR and that the Office for Health Promotion in its new form starts on 1 October. In talking to you about specificity and the exact funds, I am not trying to draw back from that commitment, but we do joint projects with both Education and DCMS. Education in particular enjoys funding through the sport premium from the £160 million sugary drinks industry levy. Another £60 million of health department funding is committed, and the Department for Education puts in, I think, £100 million. Nick will probably shake his head if I have that sum wrong. We also share objectives with others.

I would say gently that, in my opinion, the one thing that the Office for Health Promotion can do is to start to look at where we are spending money effectively, because there is a lot of money in the system in places. It is about making sure that we are encouraging all departments to look at best value and are doing what every household is having to do, which is looking at and charging themselves with, "Are we doing this as efficiently as we can? Are we doubling up? Where are policies that are connecting but that we are just not thinking about strategically enough?", and ensuring that good standards of nutrition run right through all government departments.

Those are fairly simple things that, particularly with the pressures of the last 18 months, have perhaps not had the attention they need in order to make sure that we can be not one of the unhealthiest countries in the Europe or even the world but one of the healthiest.

**The Chair:** Before we finish that question, Lord Moynihan, Nigel, it seems like this is a takeover of your department and that it will all slip into this new organisation. How do you see yourselves? How do you see

that office working, for instance, with Sport England?

**Nigel Huddleston:** That is a very good question. It is one that Jo and I have talked about because, as you can imagine—and as Jo was saying—as we establish the role, the remit, the governance and the co-ordination, those are precisely the questions that we will be sorting out. I would not say that it is a takeover. I certainly welcome any body, group or institution that is there with similar goals. We will sort out who delivers what and through which government entity. As long as we are clear on the roles and responsibilities, I do not care who takes the leadership or where it comes from, quite frankly.

When I talk to my sports colleagues around the world, which we have done frequently in the last 16 months, I find it fascinating that, for instance, the Australian Sports Minister reports to the Department of Health. The way different Governments structure their offerings and their delivery is very interesting. Quite frankly, as long as we are well co-ordinated, I am not too bothered, I really am not.

Q226 **The Chair:** I do not know what the rest of the committee thinks, but I think that was a very refreshing answer: that we are not stuck in the existing silos.

In Lord Knight's absence, I will move on. Jo said that health and activity first—sport, recreation and active lifestyle—becoming the mantra right across the nation is fundamental, yet she did not talk about a Cabinet Minister leading this. We have seen that in New Zealand—Lord Moynihan referred to it—it was the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance who led this initiative. Is it essential that we have somebody who is at least a Cabinet Member leading this initiative?

**Nigel Huddleston:** Again, I do not want to step on Jo's toes on this, but we have multiple Cabinet Ministers—Oliver Dowden at DCMS and Sajid Javid at the Department of Health and Social Care—across the broad sports and activity agenda, and this is absolutely at their hearts. Importantly, we have heard straight from the Prime Minister's mouth how important sport, physical activity and the strategy are. That is a message that Ministers have all heard from the Prime Minister, and we need to make sure we deliver on that.

Again, in terms of the organisational structure and reporting mechanisms of the OHP, your views are very important, but it is not all finalised yet. However, I get the point that leadership and metrics are important, because we all know that if it is not measured, it does not happen. I would not question the commitment. Certainly at an individual level I have had conversations about sport and activity with multiple Cabinet Ministers from many other government departments. They get it; they all get it. I am quite reassured about the political commitment.

**The Chair:** Let me stay with you, Nigel. From all the evidence that we have received throughout this inquiry, from witnesses and in written form, we hear that the policies and delivery of sport and recreation are unco-ordinated and fragmented. That is a constant complaint. Do you see

this as the answer, or is the answer doing it in a different way? Are all our eggs in this particular basket, or do you see the DCMS restructuring itself in order to be able to deliver a more co-ordinated response? I spoke to you earlier about your weekly meetings, for which there is no external evidence. That has to change, does it not?

**Nigel Huddleston:** There are always lessons to be learned. This is one of the challenges. You mentioned this in your introduction. Sport is not necessarily the same thing as physical activity, and the broad preventive health agenda covers a wider spectrum. Certainly over the last year I have spent a lot of time talking with sport's governing bodies and focusing on sport, and Sport England has relied very heavily on physical activity and activity levels. There is a mixture there. However, I have always felt completely and utterly supported by my colleagues, in particular those on the call today, about how we get activity levels up through various mechanisms and in particular through schools.

I would say that we are more co-ordinated than it might look. When you look at delivery and the mechanisms we have put in place, particularly with Covid, whether it is the national leisure recovery fund, the sport winter survival package or working with Sport England, we have co-ordinated with multiple government departments to make them happen. It is not perfect. I am always open to ideas and suggestions.

However, the point about making sure that we get even better co-ordination between sport and physical activity and the broader wellness agenda is a fair one, and that is precisely why the Prime Minister has identified it. The refresh of the Sporting Future plan is timely, because it will consider all these things.

**The Chair:** Nick, could I bring you in briefly on this particular question about co-ordination and a cross-government response? Where does education fit into that? Again, we see education at the moment as another silo rather than part of a comprehensive whole, or is that very unfair of us?

**Nick Gibb:** Those weekly meetings are taking place. While we have been on air I have sought confirmation that they are going ahead weekly. They are with officials. They are led by the DfE, so that is happening.

To some extent, departments have to be departments. If you want things to happen in schools, it has to come through the DfE. If you want things to happen through other organisations, they have to go through different departments, but we do work together. Nigel and I, as well as Jo, frequently talk and hold meetings to discuss issues. Despite the necessity of there being different departments delivering things, we are acting in a co-ordinated fashion and we are discussing the future and what future reforms we want to introduce. I discuss my ambitions with Nigel. They are very fruitful discussions and they will continue.

**The Chair:** Would you accept that at the moment there appears to be a very fragmented framework?

**Nick Gibb:** No, I do not. We have 23,000 schools, but we use 43 active partnerships based in local authorities and local sports clubs and so on. That sounds fragmented, but when you have officials meeting weekly across the different departments and you have Ministers meeting regularly across the different departments, that is a sign of co-ordination. Everyone seems to want a department that does everything, but of course that department or that Cabinet Minister would not be in charge of schools and health and local government and transport and culture and sport. The key thing is that the officials work together and the Ministers work together, and that is certainly happening.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Nick. Now we come to one of the major areas of concern during the inquiry, and that is the duty of care and safeguarding. I will bring in Lord Hayward here. Baroness Brady is on this call but is finding it difficult to connect in, which is why Lord Hayward has very kindly agreed to lead on this.

Q227 **Lord Hayward:** Nigel, I will come to you first with three specific questions. Can I ask you to start your answers to the three specific questions with either “yes” or “no”? You can then expand on that. First, do we need a sports ombudsman, as recommended in Baroness Grey-Thompson’s independent review of duty of care? Secondly, is there a need to introduce mandatory reporting? Thirdly, should adult duty of care requirements be mandatory to receive public funding?

I give notice to the other Ministers that I am likely to come back with supplementaries.

**Nigel Huddleston:** On the third point, yes. To the first two points, I would say maybe. Huge credit goes to Tanni for the work that she did back in 2017 and the work she has been doing for years in this area. So that is a maybe, a maybe and a yes.

I know that having an ombudsman was a recommendation in the report. Interestingly, when I took over the role I asked what the latest reports and recommendations were in the sports arena and where we were on them. Again, I am afraid, events got in the way of things. We are keeping an open mind on the ombudsman. When it comes to ombudsmen and governance in sport generally, as long as things get done I am comfortable with not taking a heavy-handed approach or creating a new institution. If things are not getting done, I think we will need to create an institution, a body or an individual to make sure that things happen.

On the ombudsman, I think the jury is out. We have seen progress in this area over the last few years, in particular with many governing bodies taking their responsibilities far more seriously. I will go back to thanking Tanni and the team for their work there. Of course, this is a topic that gets a lot of media attention, and quite rightly. The only reason it gets media attention is because there is greater reporting and greater awareness than there ever has been, which is a good thing; it is good that people are talking about the issues in this arena more than ever

before. I keep an open mind on the structure. I am sure that Tanni will have some follow-up conversations. I know that officials have as well.

The final question was basically about whether entities that are receiving government money are doing the right thing and reporting appropriately and properly. Yes, I think that is the thing that we need to focus on. You have just seen the refreshed governance code developed by UK Sport and Sport England, which makes pretty clear some of the requirements for reporting and establishing visibility, refreshing the previous code. I am comfortable there, but we will see where we go on the ombudsman.

**Lord Hayward:** Before I move to the supplementaries, you said two maybes and a yes. Can I clarify which question the yes was to?

**Nigel Huddleston:** I think your final question was about making sure about reporting mechanisms on duty of care.

**Lord Hayward:** To receive public funding?

**Nigel Huddleston:** To receive public funding. Yes to that.

Q228 **Lord Hayward:** You referred to greater reporting. It may be relevant for the other two Ministers to make observations here, but is what happens that the Government say, "We're looking at reports", then they pass it over to UK Sport, which then passes it to the governing bodies? Should the Government not have a greater role, particularly because every time we have a crisis in this field, all Governments say, "What we're doing now we will ensure never happens again", but it does happen again.

**Nigel Huddleston:** I can answer first, but I know colleagues might want to come in here. In certain aspects, you are absolutely right. We are talking here about a spectrum of issues in duty of care and safeguarding, but in the area of concussion, for example, where a lot of activity is going on, that is exactly the problem that I have identified, in that we just do not have the data to know. Is the data being collected accurately? Is it being shared appropriately? Is it even being reported in the first place? Are there incentives or disincentives to report at grass-roots and elite levels?

You have hit the nail on the head in terms of whether the data is there. Of course, if nobody is collecting that data, you get zero returns, but we all know that that is not the case in so many of these extraordinarily sensitive areas. I mention concussion, but we all know that the reporting in exploitation, sexual exploitation and other areas is a problem and that we cannot necessarily rely on data, especially if it is dispersed and fragmented. We need other mechanisms, including surveys. Anecdotal reporting through private mechanisms, whistleblowers and so on is also important, but data is key here and it is not good enough.

Q229 **Lord Hayward:** Is it not a condemnation of the Government and the lack of co-ordination between government departments and sports that you are saying that you do not have the information? What have you done to try to get that information?

**Nigel Huddleston:** There has been significant progress in several areas. Tanni's report came out with 70-odd recommendations, and a good chunk of them have been worked up. With the level of focus on duty of care and safeguarding, people with roles and responsibilities gathering data and reporting, things have improved in the last three or four years. However, in certain areas I am concerned that we still do not have the data, concussion being one of those areas. That we recognise and acknowledge that it is not perfect is progress to some degree, but I am not going to pretend that we do not have a long way to go.

This topic covers all sorts of issues and concerns. Recently there have been improvements in duty of care and safeguarding through changes to the rules and regulations, such as the laws on coaches. Progress has been made, but there is more to do.

**The Chair:** Jo, would you like to come in there?

**Jo Churchill:** Thank you very much. I am not trying to have sloping shoulders in this area, but DCMS has responsibility for safeguarding in sports generally and DfE in schools. Nigel just referred to concussion in rugby. We have been collaborating and working with officials in DCMS on that and there is to be a meeting next week.

To Lord Hayward's point, this is hard. You may have noticed how tricky it is to deal with health data issues. Making sure that things are safe and trusted, and instructing that something is to be done about appropriate and proportionate access, requires more than a stroke of a pen. We are working in this area, because concussion has quite far-reaching effects, particularly when you look at the impact on footballers and the research that is now coming out about heading some years ago and the prevalence now of Alzheimer's and so on. All that data and research is still being worked on. That is why we work across departments and why we have these conversations. Health comes in, where appropriate, on this particular issue.

**Lord Hayward:** Nick, do you want to add anything to that?

**Nick Gibb:** We make sure that schools have the expert advice they need from sports organisations about how to manage different sports in a safe way. Organisations such as the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity, ukactive, the Youth Sport Trust, the Association for Physical Education and Sport England all publish guidance. They published guidance in 2019 to help schools to know what to look for, for example when employing coaches for children outside school.

Also, as Nigel said, there is the Sport England and UK Sport requirement to meet the standards in *A Code For Sports Governance*. That code sets out specific obligations relating to safeguarding and the standards for safeguarding and protecting children in sport that were issued by the NSPCC. Our approach is to give schools autonomy in which sports they offer, and then we point them to guidance from expert organisations in how to manage those sports safely.

**Q230 The Chair:** Thank you very much indeed, Lord Hayward. Jo, before we leave this question, clearly if the new Office for Health Promotion develops in the way you have indicated and in the way Lord Moynihan mentioned, the likelihood is that delivering a recipe for greater physical activity will become the norm rather than the exception. Therefore, to have safeguarding and duty of care structures within that organisation would seem to me to be fundamental, not an add-on or extra that you could devolve to another department. Am I wrong in thinking that?

**Jo Churchill:** I would refer you back to the answer that essentially the office will be led by the CMO. The CMO's overriding objective is to drive up levels of activity. We do not need safeguarding with respect to going for a walk or doing a run. You may need to take appropriate measures for your own or your children's safety if you are going on a cycle ride or encouraging them to cycle to school and so on, but I would very gently push back. As Nick said, what goes on in the school is the responsibility of the Department for Education, and likewise what goes on in sports complexes and teams and so on is the responsibility of the DCMS.

I am not trying to avoid the question, but I think it was phrased something like, "Are you not losing your ability to control this agenda to Minister Huddleston?" If you are telling me that they are losing control to Health on the one hand, but at the same time they are trying to give Health more, I would very gently say that this is, as ever, about balance and that it is better that those who have responsibility for their particular environment look after the safeguarding there.

**The Chair:** I am gently reprimanded. I will move on now to Baroness Grey-Thompson.

**Q231 Baroness Grey-Thompson:** Good afternoon. I am interested in the Government's position on the post-Covid recovery plans for sport, physical activity and recreation and how we can reboot the activity rates. Fantastic spectator experiences—we have the Euros, and Tokyo is coming up—do not necessarily drive change. I am interested in what the biggest drivers of activity are in our country and how the Government can support them, because it is not just about physical activity for physical activity's sake but about the health of our nation.

**Nigel Huddleston:** Thank you, Tanni. I think that question was to me first. You are raising a question that occupies a huge chunk of my time and that of the department and the sports team here at DCMS. How do we recover?

We have had a staged process. The first stage was enabling sport to survive and then reopen. It is probably important to show how important and what a top priority sport and physical activity was and is to the Government by virtue of the fact that, unlike in many other countries around the world, the one thing you were able to do during the deepest, darkest steps of lockdown was exercise and to be physically active. Not every country had that. We did and it was a conscious, deliberate policy



decision to enable that. It was also controversial, but we absolutely made sure that that was a top priority.

In terms of prioritising reopening, again you have seen that sport and physical activity were among the first to reopen. As soon as we were able to, we did just that. That goes for grass roots as well as all the benefits we had of financial flows and mental health in getting sport back behind closed doors, precisely because of the things you talked about—the lift and the unity that sport can give people, and the inspiration it gives. I am sure Nick will talk about the priority that was given to sport and physical activity at schools as well.

In terms of where we have come from, has it been prioritised and an absolute focus? Yes, plus there was the £600 million in survival packages and the £100 million in leisure centre support. The Treasury estimated that by the end of last year over £1.5 billion was prioritised to sport and physical activity.

There is also the pivotal role that the private sector plays here, because our sport is fragmented. I know that that is sometimes criticised, but it works pretty well. We have a huge range of sports that people participate in right across the country, and sports bodies had an incredible commitment to do sport during Covid, as seen in all the community activity that they get involved with. They can be inspiring. We have individuals who inspire us.

We will continue that focus. The onus of responsibility on Sport England's shoulders has probably never been greater, so we will be working much more closely with it across government to make sure that it is able to do what we are tasking it to do, which is making sure that we recover and grow physical activity levels. We have the spending review coming up. I cannot pre-empt that, but you can imagine the conversations we will be having at department level about where we go there.

Of all people, you know the role that major sporting events can have in inspiring, encouraging and motivating. Not only do we have the Euros, and we have the Olympics coming up, but most importantly—it would be remiss of me not to mention this, given that I am the Minister for it—we also have the Commonwealth Games next year, so, with one year to go, tickets will go on sale very soon, in just a few weeks' time.

We are already having great engagement across departments and across government about how we can get the biggest bang for the buck there. So there is a variety of areas, but at its heart is co-ordinating and working closely with governing bodies in sports to make sure that that private and public sector relationship is as strong as it can be. Sport England is key here.

**Nick Gibb:** During Covid we provided schools with guidance to continue to provide PE sport and physical activity, despite all the Covid restrictions. We wanted schools to continue that when they were open for all pupils, despite all the restrictions. When schools were in lockdown,

when they closed to most pupils—they were always open to vulnerable children and children of critical workers—and when most children were at home, we also had online lessons through the Oak National Academy, which is a streaming service for videoed lessons right across the curriculum, including sport.

Now that schools are back, the best thing for children is to be back in school, which is why we were so determined in March that schools would reopen. They are guided to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, including physical activity, again providing advice on what could and could not happen while restrictions were still on schools.

This summer, when schools break up in a couple of weeks' time, we have the summer schools. We provided £200 million for secondary schools to provide some summer-school provision, as well as the holiday and activity food programme, the £220 million programme for activities particularly for disadvantaged children over those summer weeks so that they can remain active and have a nutritious meal midday.

**Jo Churchill:** I will not repeat Nigel's comments, but we have been doing as much as we can in the area of PHE with campaigns like Active 10, Change4Life, which gives parents advice for children between three and 11, the Moving Healthcare Professionals programme and making sure that we have trained the people to ask the right questions, because that is also part of it. We know that about 31.3% more children do not do more than 30 minutes. The levels need to be driven up, and we need to work hard at that.

The inquiry talks about sport and recreation. We have focused on the sport element of it, but a lot of the recreation element, as well as the sport, helped to build resilience in young people's mental health. You know better than anybody how keeping active and being with other people can really help people. We have spent an awful lot of time on our own, and mental well-being is a huge part of both sport and recreation. That is another area which the department is focusing on.

To reiterate Nigel's point, there are a number of celebrities available to encourage people to do things; a number of people said that they looked at Joe Wicks and got active with their children, learning from the pandemic and using different things like online to do sport in their home. As I said earlier, we have to be much smarter than this. You and I both know the value of sport, particularly for children.

Q232 **Lord Addington:** A few sports bodies have a good record of having very good targeted recruitment campaigns. I am thinking about rugby and netball and their World Cup campaigns, when they prepared their clubs to receive people and had a message going out and across. Will you be taking this on a wider scale? To make it successful, what support do you need from your colleagues? I will start with Nigel on that.

**Nigel Huddleston:** I think I get the gist of the question. I would say that there has probably never been a closer relationship between sport and

government before, because we have literally had to have day-to-day discussions about survivability with pretty much every sport over the last 15 months. We know their financial circumstances, their family circumstances and everything in intimate detail now because of the challenges ahead.

In terms of recovery, we were able to get the survival packages out precisely because of the recognition of the vital role that a whole variety of sports plays right across the country in physical activity, in mental health, in their role in their communities and in all the other things. They are absolutely pivotal.

In terms of where they go with recruiting, I have seen and am quite impressed by how some strong, established sports are still going out there to create a much broader range of potential new players. You see that with the efforts that cricket and football are making with women and ethnic minorities. Many sports are making a huge effort. They are deliberately targeting their own foundational money at underrepresented groups to make sure that more children are involved and engaged and that the numbers increase—

**Lord Addington:** My question was not so much about that. It was more that there will be a drop-off in people's participation and habits. That is inevitable. You will also have older players who may not come back to all these sports. But you have had a model within sport that is usually built around big events, and I have given you two examples. Are you taking that model and expanding it, and what support do you need from your colleagues?

**Nigel Huddleston:** Unless I am misinterpreting it, it is about taking full advantage of every opportunity where you get high-profile visibility and build from it. They do a pretty good job of that. There is also the legacy. We have the Rugby League World Cup coming up, for example. Rugby league is focused on engaging more, and there are all the community engagement activities, and there is thinking about the legacy months if not years in advance. We are certainly looking to make sure, from a Commonwealth Games perspective, that we inspire and engage more people.

I am having difficulty answering the question, because I see a major role for sports here. I am not sure that government should also do the role of governing bodies here, other than to encourage and support them.

**Lord Addington:** One clarification point. Usually when these models work—in the case of rugby and netball, the model is a big event—you have been trained and the question is whether you will be back and involved. You have this on a massive scale now. Will you be giving out templates to other sports to adapt these strategies, and what help do you need from your colleagues?

**Nigel Huddleston:** Sorry, I probably do not understand exactly what you are trying to get at. Maybe my perception is that they do it quite well

already and share learnings and best practices, because I have regular meetings and we have a sports working group where exactly these kinds of discussions take place. You are probably coming from a mental model where you think that they are not doing it very well.

**Lord Addington:** The Chair is giving that look over the glasses, which I am learning to appreciate. Are you looking at best practice with regard to recruitment coming back in and what support you need, particularly in things like education and getting young people involved in clubs, because the link has been broken and it is important.

**Nigel Huddleston:** We want to encourage participation. We see that primarily through governing bodies continuing with what I consider to be pretty impressive efforts of constantly trying to engage young people, volunteers and coaches.

In terms of what support we are giving, I would say that we are doing that all the time at grass-roots level. We are talking about tens of millions and hundreds of millions of pounds over years going via Sport England to do just that.

We probably need a side conversation. I do not think I have quite understood what you are getting at, but I am more than happy to take suggestions and recommendations for how we can do it better. We have ins with the governing bodies, and they are always willing to learn and share.

Q233 **The Chair:** Thank you very much. A side question which the committee has constantly faced right from the beginning and throughout this inquiry is whether we invite the sponsorship of elite sports to bring more people into the sports themselves. We had good evidence from the Olympics that we did not get the kick-on that we expected there. We have had that from other tournaments. I suspect the same will happen with the soccer and the netball, although perhaps not with the rugby union because I think they are structured differently.

That is what we are trying to get at: is there a correlation between investing in these major national sports, which government does invest in, and do we get the payback of greater participation?

**Nigel Huddleston:** We always get an uptick in activity around major international sports, including ones that happen overseas. People take up tennis during Wimbledon. Particularly with athletics and so on, there is a huge burst whenever we have these events. They generally have a pretty good bang for the buck, which is precisely why we have these quite aggressive global competitions to host them in the first place: they have a beneficial economic benefit as well as a pretty good legacy in terms of activity.

You are right though to question whether we always take full advantage of them. I can tell you that for the Commonwealth Games we are thinking of the legacy and sustaining it way in advance, perhaps longer than we have done with previous competitions. I understand what you

are getting at now, and I think we are in vehement agreement rather than disagreement.

**The Chair:** I am sure we are, but Lord Moynihan is about to come in, so that might change.

Q234 **Lord Moynihan:** I am sure we will continue in agreement. I have a key question to you, Jo, picking up on your observation about Joe Wicks. What is absent in the answers given so far today, and what has been absent in the press release on the Office for Health Promotion, is the use of IT. We have heard evidence from governing bodies that do not even have an app that relates to increasing participation in their sport. We are in the 2020s.

Are you happy with the current state of the use of technology and IT to reach young people and society as a whole to become more active, to promote physical activity and to improve mental health? Should not much more be done in this area? Jo and Nick, your observations on this would be useful, as would Nick's about schools.

**Jo Churchill:** My simple answer would be yes. We could do an awful lot more to use and harness the benefits of technology. My husband is an expert rugby coach and, I hesitate to say, West Ham supporter from the sofa; he does not engage in either sport any more.

PHE has been working on this. There is the Better Health app, the Active 10 app, the Couch to 5K app, and making sure when that parkruns came back the data was available to people and all there at their fingertips. There is the use of that. There is a much broader use, particularly for benefiting people. We have diabetes in this country that affects one in 10 males over the age of 40, with a huge cost to the National Health Service. If we could use more apps, hence the pilot today, that would encourage people.

It is not the only way, because behaviour change and getting people more active is a lot harder than us having a conversation here today, as is sustaining it, which I think is what you were alluding to in the last question. How do you keep it up? How do you get that interest at school? It is in making sure that we can get people young, because all the data and the research indicates to us that those who have good levels of physical activity as they come out of primary school tend to be more engaged in their teenage years and tend to be more involved through their 20s and then further on.

All those things we should be logging better with more data. We can use wearable technologies, both to enhance people's health and to measure the level of activity. I have already alluded to musculoskeletal effects, and we know the effect of activity and controlling our diets on cancer, diabetes and heart disease. The payback here is enormous. It is about starting while they are young, making sure that we get to people who are digitally excluded and do not forget them, and making sure that we always have something else to give people.

Q235 **Lord Moynihan:** Nigel, I cannot find an app here that tells me where, within a two-mile radius, I can go cycling or play sport for under £10, or what is on offer to me. Should all governing bodies not be right on top of this and have outreach campaigns through IT? If we are going to promote physical activity, if we are going to increase participation, is IT not fully central to that?

**Nigel Huddleston:** Yes, it is, as an enabler to identify where the opportunities are and to enhance the sport and activity experience. Some of the most successful apps around are sport and physical activity apps and so on, whether it is step counts or enabling identification of opportunities. You are right. I also see the responsibility primarily here, because often there is a financial incentive for the private sector and sports governing bodies themselves to take the lead here, but there is a co-ordinating role for government.

Sport England has the OpenActive programme, which is doing some of the things you just mentioned. It co-ordinates and covers data for the Open Data Institute to identify where the opportunities are, what is available and when. We have also seen innovations over the last few weeks and months that I think are here to stay, such as checking the app on the various gym operators to see what is available and how crowded a gym is when it is open.

You are right that there is a golden opportunity here to use technology not to replace but to enhance the physical activity experience, including the identification of availability. There are some data concerns and issues around this, but we can overcome those or work with all stakeholders to do so. I am quite excited about this area, and I think we will see some greater innovations.

**Nick Gibb:** During the lockdown in Easter 2020, 40 teachers got together with support from the department and created the Oak National Academy. That has expanded to thousands of lessons right across the curriculum, from age five to 16, with 100 million downloads and views, including lessons on how to remain physically active and water safety lessons, all provided through videoed lessons through Oak National Academy. Now that schools are back, we still intend that facility to be available, and it could be available, for teachers to use right into the future. The use of technology has huge potential, particularly for things like CPD for teachers.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Lord Moynihan. Lord Knight, you could not help but come in here.

Q236 **Lord Knight of Weymouth:** Very quickly. Nick, I do not expect you to have the data here now, but it would be interesting to see from Oak's data which subjects lessons been consumed in and where PE fits within all that. My assumption is that there will be a lot of maths, English and science, for example, but it would be very interesting to see the particular data on PE subjects.

Nigel, I would be interested in whether there is a discussion about a

common API that all the governing bodies worked to so that Colin can get his app.

**Nick Gibb:** We will certainly supply that. I am interested in it, too. I think you are right that maths, English and science will be at the top, but I hope that sport and swimming will also be in the high numbers. We will send that to the committee.

**Nigel Huddleston:** You raise a good point. There is a co-ordinating role for government here and I am happy to get back to you on that. Given what Nick just said and the link with technology, I should also say that with the Active Recovery Hub, the broader sports programme that we have for summer, we have seen a massive increase in interest in online suggestions, learnings and so on. We have seen something like a 3,000% increase in hits on the School Games website and the summer sporting activities offering, so we can see that the enthusiasm and the interest are there, and we need to build on it.

**The Chair:** Thank you all for that. We slipped that in, because we had some time and I am grateful for your answers on that. Moving on now to education and children and young people, Baroness Blower has a question.

Q237 **Baroness Blower:** Thank you very much, Lord Chair. Nick, you will be delighted that this will be your opportunity to speak about the school sports premium, but first there is a preliminary question. The committee has heard a lot about physical literacy. Is this the point at which the PE curriculum and community sport provision might be updated and reconsidered in order to have a greater focus on physical literacy? This is not just about teaching the mechanisms of a particular sport, but the generality of physical literacy in order to be able to enjoy activities.

**Nick Gibb:** Thank you. I knew you as plain old—well, plain, not old—Christine Blower. It is lovely to see you again, Baroness Blower. This is an interesting question. I am relatively new to this area and I am interested in reforming PE and sport in schools. This is a relatively new distinction. I am interested in what the committee thinks about the distinction between physical literacy and sport. Is it sport that we want children to be engaged in in school, whether that is individual sport or team sport, or is it more physical literacy? The curriculum at the moment is geared towards physical literacy and making sure that children acquire the skills of different sports, but I am also interested in making sure that children are active.

It worries me when Jo Churchill talks about the proportions of children who are arriving in primary school obese and leaving primary school similarly. We need to think very carefully about what we want from our sporting activities in schools to make sure that children are physically active, learn the habit of being physically active and learn to play sport as a way of enjoying being physically active. However, there are some children who prefer to be physically active, which does not involve competitive sport, and we need to make sure that we cater for those children as well. I would put myself in that category when I was a child.

It is important that all children with all different interests are encouraged to be physically active as a way of remaining healthy, and not just physically healthy but mentally healthy. In the relationships and sex education curriculum, we have made it clear that children should be taught about the importance of physical activity as a way of remaining both physically healthy and mentally healthy.

**Baroness Blower:** Thank you. Nigel, do you have any observations on this in terms of community sport provision particularly?

**Nigel Huddleston:** It is a good point. Nick mentioned earlier that we have been having quite a lot of conversations over the last year about sport provision in schools, and about the community aspects that you raise such as the manifesto commitment of opening up schools and school sports facilities—we know that a huge chunk of total sporting facilities in the country are behind school gates—and how we can get a better bang for the buck for those assets.

We have already made some strides there and there has been investment already with pilots. There is great interest in that and in making sure that there is greater provision and ability for children to engage in sporting activities during school time and outside it, and making sure that we use them in the communities when the schools would normally be closed. That is an area where we have a lot of work to do, but it can be quite exciting.

The point you are making about education is absolutely key. Our opportunity to engage and enthuse earlier on in all sports is incredible. Over time, they sometimes lose that enthusiasm or just do not think they are any good at it. But the younger they are when we get them in and the more enthusiastic they are, the better, and it often stays with them for life. We have seen stats on that. You do not have to be great to be excited about or even to continue sport. We just want to make sure that they are enthusiastic and enjoy it.

**Jo Churchill:** For the CMO the focus is on movement. Do children know how to climb? Do children know how to skip and so on? I have bored Nigel and Nick to death about the use of the 40% of sports facilities that sit behind the school perimeter. With a good bit of cross-government working—the pilot has had £10 million invested in it so far—I am sure we can do so much more, particularly in deprived communities. What facility do we have? We nearly always have a school. Educate parents there as well to help build the family's resilience.

**The Chair:** We will return to that, Jo, so you will have a bigger opportunity to discuss that later.

Q238 **Baroness Blower:** Could I carry on with the question about the PE and school sports premium? There has been evidence to the committee that it sometimes lacks transparency and accountability about how it is used. The committee's understanding was that this was supposed to provide additionality in terms of moneys available to schools, but it seems to be



used often simply to outsource PE, perhaps more in the primary phase than in the secondary phase. Do you have any observations about that in particular, Nick?

**Nick Gibb:** Yes, there are very clear conditions attached to the premium. It is meant to be additional, and it is also meant to be about sustainable improvements so that it can carry on even if there were no sports premium there. We have so far allocated £1.6 billion to the PE and sports premium, and we announced earlier last month that we will continue with the £320 million for the next academic year.

However, as you say, it is meant to be additional. Schools are required to provide an annual report on, and to put on their website, how they have used that very significant amount of money. An average primary school, for example, will receive about £18,000, so these are not small sums of money and we want to make sure that it is spent in a way that delivers the objectives of the scheme.

I think it is delivering. I mentioned at the beginning of this session the survey that we did in 2018, when we doubled it from £160 million to £320 million, and the impact that that doubling was having. It was clearly increasing the amount of activity for children in school, increasing teacher confidence to teach PE, and raising the profile of PE in schools. It is a successful scheme, but you are right that it should be additional to the things that the school is already doing.

Q239 **Lord Knight of Weymouth:** Nick, to follow up on that, we heard from PE teachers that some of them felt that the money was not quite coming through, that head teachers were reprioritising it and that there needed to be better accountability. During an Ofsted inspection, is there a role for a subject inspection into sport so that it could look at whether the sports premium is delivering the return on the investment that you and I would want?

**Nick Gibb:** There is an increasing focus on the curriculum in Ofsted's new inspection framework and on extracurricular activities that it is looking at. We want to give schools discretion about how they spend the money, and we hold them to account by asking them to provide a report on how they have spent the money. There is clear guidance about how they should spend the money, and case studies and so on about how it should be spent. But the more you constrain the discretion and freedom of schools to provide the facilities in the way they wish to, the less effective our school system is. We pride ourselves on unleashing the professional autonomy and spirit of our school system. But you are right that the accountability system is through the reporting mechanism.

**Lord Knight of Weymouth:** Is any kind of data collected from those annual reports that you could share with us that show how head teachers are choosing to use that autonomy and that discretion?

**Nick Gibb:** I will seek advice on that to see what collective data we have that we can send to the committee. We will provide the committee with whatever we have that we can supply without too much challenge.

**Q240 Lord Snape:** I have a question about mixed-gender sporting opportunities. I was taken aback by the strong feeling among some secondary school pupils who gave evidence to the committee that they would prefer more mixed-gender sporting opportunities. They talked about the abolition of gendered sports and the opportunity to try a wider range of sports and activities. Are you considering these types of changes for PE, school and community sport, and would you rule out any sports from the sort of gender mixing that people seem so keen on?

**Nick Gibb:** Schools are required to follow the Equality Act. They have to ensure that both boys and girls have equal access to high-quality PE and sport in schools and in organising and delivering a diverse and challenging PE curriculum that suits the needs of all pupils. That is a requirement that schools have. The Equality Act allows for the provision of single-sex activities in schools, but schools must also provide boys and girls with equal opportunities to participate in comparable sporting activities.

**Lord Snape:** Nigel, what about your views on mixed-gender sport?

**Nigel Huddleston:** We have seen good progress here. I often work with the governing bodies, and they are trying to do as much as they can to encourage participation. In particular, it is usually women who we need to encourage into sport rather than men, but there are a couple of sports of where it is the other way around as well. All the governing bodies that I talk to are very keen to encourage that.

Going back to the safeguarding points that we raised earlier, because of the physiology it is not always practical or reasonable to have mixed-gender sport, certainly at the competitive level. But when it comes to exciting young people—all young people, all demographics and sexes—let us try to do everything we can to make sure that everybody gets an equal opportunity there. Girls often get very excited about sports that are traditionally seen as boys' sports and then become the biggest advocates of them later in life. We are seeing some incredible sporting success at elite levels recently because of the progress we have made here.

I have a working group on women and girls in sports that is looking at exactly these issues. I am not sure when we will get its report, but I am sure we will be able to share some findings with the committee.

**Lord Snape:** Thank you. Jo, you mentioned problems of concussion in rugby earlier. The thought of mixed-gender rugby would keep your department's lawyers in work for some time, I would have thought. What is your view on physical contact sports like that?

**Jo Churchill:** As somebody who played mixed hockey, probably about 40 years ago, I hoped that we had moved beyond talking about it in these terms. I want an environment where it is accessible and enjoyed. The word we have not used hugely in today's session is "enjoyment". Many of us never go on to be Olympic athletes or stars, but we enjoy being able to slap a tennis ball around on a tennis court. If nobody else is around,

you want somebody to play with. You do not very often ask yourself, "How good are they?", "What gender are they?", "Can they run faster than me?" or anything else.

I would gently say that, from a physical activity point of view, I want it accessible, I want it there and I want it fun. Many a game of female football is now proving to the population as a whole that it is just as enjoyable as the men's game. However we can get them going, however we can encourage them, is good.

We give a lot of choice, and some sports clubs have told me that that gives them opportunity but also challenge, because children now have considerably more choice in the activities they might pursue than perhaps we had 40 or 50 years ago, where we had a more traditional route. That is not wrong, but obviously it has to come into the thinking about how we encourage some of the larger team sports to go on in our local communities. I would say, "Get out there and enjoy it". I will soon have a game of bowls with you or a game of tennis or whatever you want to do.

**Lord Snape:** At my time of life, a game of bowls would be energetic enough, but thanks for the offer anyway.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. One of the most contentious issues that we have had during the inquiry is about PE in schools. Baroness Morris of Yardley has a question here.

Q241 **Baroness Morris of Yardley:** Thank you. Nick, this question is probably for you, but if Jo and Nigel want to come in, please say so. We have given witnesses an opportunity at the end of our discussions to say what recommendation they would most want us to put into the report. I would think that getting PE in schools better than it is now is probably top of the list. It has come on, not just because of teachers but because of people right across professional and amateur sport. Whatever the progress, whether it is being done under the sport premium or whatever, it is a good step forward, although there are questions about it and there is more to be done.

When we spoke to some teachers, who were very, very good, the issue they raised with us was the lack of training for teachers of PE. There are two questions together. If you do a primary PGCE or something like that, you do a year and then you go into a primary school and are responsible for teaching your class physical education. How much training will you have had during that ITT year to teach PE and sport in schools? Secondly, do you know how many children are not taught by a specialist PE teacher in secondary schools? The first question is about how well we train our teachers.

**Nick Gibb:** We are in the middle of some major reforms to teacher training. It started with the early career framework, which is about support for young teachers in the first couple of years of their careers in schools, to make sure that they are mentored and helped to acquire the skills that you need in a classroom, such as how to manage behaviour,

how to manage in general and how to create a curriculum. That has extended into initial teacher training with the core content framework.

There is an increasing emphasis on subject knowledge and skills in teaching your particular subject. That is the direction of travel that our major reforms to initial teacher training are driving. We want what I call a golden thread, from initial teacher training to the early years career framework through to the national professional qualifications. The golden thread is that they are all evidence-based approaches to teaching. It is about spreading best practice and making sure that there is a real focus on subject knowledge.

In terms of the number of specialists in secondary schools, PE recruitment is one of the areas each year where we have met our targets. I can write to the committee with the precise answer to your question, but in answer to the question about meeting our targets for recruitment based on the teacher supply model, I can say that we meet it every year. In fact, we exceed it, so I would be surprised if the figures that I send you show that PE is not being taught by specialists in secondary school.

**Baroness Morris of Yardley:** Going back to the primary bit—I take that point—unless things have changed a lot and I have this wrong, there will be teachers teaching PE to their class in primary schools who do not have PE as a specialist subject in a PGCE course. You did not answer the question. You talked about more time for subject knowledge, but if you are a history graduate, maths graduate or English graduate, how much training for PE to primary school children do you get during your initial teacher training year? Do not say that there is an early years career framework for the next two years, because I know that. I am talking about how much they get before they are put in front of a class.

**Nick Gibb:** This is why we had a manifesto commitment in 2019: for there to be better training for PE teachers in primary schools. That has not progressed as swiftly as we would want because of the Covid issue, but we are determined to deliver it. It is part of the issues we are discussing as part of the spending review, so that is in train. Another reason why the PE and sport premium is the primary PE and sport premium is that it is focused on primary schools. We see that as a key area of priority to improve the quality of sport and PE in primary schools.

Generally, I have been discussing with Nigel a more extensive approach to reform of the provision of sport in schools and PE in schools, both primary and secondary, because I share your concern. There have been huge improvements as a consequence of the PE and sport premium, the school and activity action plan and other measures, but there is more to do. It is an area of reform that I am extremely interested in, and I would like to see the same kind of reform approach taken to this area as we have implemented in other academic areas over the past 10 years.

**Baroness Morris of Yardley:** Let me have one more go at the first question and then I will just have to take what you said. It was said to us that on average it is six hours in the initial teacher training year.

Teachers are put in front of a class and expected to take on the PE curriculum in primary schools with six hours' training. If that turns out to be the amount of time, would you think that was where we should be?

**Nick Gibb:** The issue in primary schools of course is that teachers are generalists.

**Baroness Morris of Yardley:** That is the problem. That is what I am trying to say. That is exactly right.

**Nick Gibb:** They teach geography and maths and history and English and so on. You could pick any one subject and you will see those kinds of minimal hours for specific subject-based training.

**Baroness Morris of Yardley:** You could indeed.

**Nick Gibb:** The recommendation that might be forthcoming from your committee is that you would like more specialist teachers in primary schools. That would be an interesting recommendation that we would look at. Primary PE teachers get specific training from national governing bodies of sport, so there is that training available for primary teachers who want to specialise in PE. You will find that there are primary teachers who do take a particular interest in sport and PE in their schools.

Q242 **Baroness Morris of Yardley:** Let me add one last question. It is a short one, because I appreciate we have taken a lot of time. With the premium, one of the other things we heard from the teachers we talked to was that essentially some schools are using the premium to bring in coaches—not teachers, coaches—from outside bodies. Therefore, it is not enhancing the skills of the teachers in the school, because very often the teachers are not at the lesson; they are doing other things.

I know that is not meant to be permitted, but I have heard it too many times for it not to be the case in a sizeable number of schools. Am I right in thinking that it would be of concern to you if schools were bringing in external coaches who were teaching the lessons and the teacher was not teaching alongside them to learn from them? Indeed, I am not even sure they could learn from them, but I give you either scenario.

**Nick Gibb:** That is what they are meant to do. This is meant to be a sustainable programme. They can bring in coaches, but they are meant to team teach with the existing staff so that they can upskill the existing staff to be able to teach that particular sport once that coach has left.

**Baroness Morris of Yardley:** They are not teachers, do not forget.

**Nick Gibb:** No, they are coaches, but we want there to be some upskilling of the staff in the school, whether that is teachers in the school or teaching assistants in the school. That is meant to be what happens with the £18,000, on average, that is allocated to each primary school. It is about upskilling the teachers and making a sustainable change for the long term in that school and not simply to use it to provide teaching of a

particular lesson and then they move on. You are right: it is meant to be a sustainable approach.

**Q243 Lord Knight of Weymouth:** I will be brief. Looking at the core content framework for initial teacher training, there is no mention of physical activity; there is no mention of activity at all. It is all about knowledge. You would be forgiven for thinking, if you were a teacher training provider, that your job was to train primary teachers to deliver the academic subjects in the curriculum, because there is nothing about PE in it. Is that an omission?

**Nick Gibb:** No, it is about the knowledge of the thing that you are teaching. Knowledge also includes science practicals and how to teach a musical instrument, for example. It can also include the knowledge of the sport and how you would teach it, so that is important. As you know, a new initiative was announced just this week about the next stage of teacher training. We want to make sure that we have a generation of teachers coming through the system in the future who are receiving the training that they need to be able to deliver their subject in the most effective way, based on the evidence that we already have in the school system about the most effective way of teaching. That will include how you teach sport in schools.

**Q244 The Chair:** Thank you very much. Nick, before we leave this, one of the most disturbing things in the evidence that has come through to us—this goes back to Jo Churchill’s comment about enjoyment, which I totally and fundamentally agree with—is the amount of time that is being reduced for physical activity, both PE and games, within schools. The group of children we saw a few weeks ago said that once they got to key stage 4 they were lucky if they had an hour a week. You are not going to tackle these fundamental issues on an hour a week. Will you do something about that?

**Nick Gibb:** Yes, I share the concern. It is compulsory at all four key stages. We do not allocate time. It is in our legislation that government does not determine how much time is spent per subject, but I would be concerned about an hour a week of physical activity for young people at key stage 4. This is one of many issues that I am currently looking at in terms of reforming this area of the curriculum.

**The Chair:** Nigel, before we move on to our final question, one of the exciting things that we saw when we were talking with Scandinavian and New Zealand colleagues was the closeness of clubs and schools in delivering sporting activity. In Sweden, primary schools were bringing in clubs from the first day the children arrived in school, yet we seem to have a split between school and clubs. Is that on your agenda?

**Nigel Huddleston:** It is. I know what you are talking about there, but I have also seen the exact opposite, particularly when I go to sports clubs around the country and see how close they are to the schools. The problem you are highlighting is that it is a very mixed pattern around the country.

I have had a very sincere commitment from the governing bodies about wanting to get closer to schools. They are very keen to get closer to schools. Nick and I have been talking about this over the last few weeks, and they have come up to the stump because they are doing so this summer and we need to find a way to make sure that that is sustainable in the longer term as well. I have seen it work very well and I would like to see more of that. I lived and worked in America for a while as well and I saw a similar thing to what you have been hearing about in Scandinavia.

**Q245 Lord Addington:** The last question is about opening up school facilities for community use and what is preventing schools from doing this. I would like to break with tradition and to go to Nigel first on this one, not Nick. Many smaller clubs, certainly amateur clubs, start their initiation on things like school playing fields. It is certainly true of things like football and rugby, hockey and so on. What problems are you having accessing this huge potential resource? We will come to Nick after that and then Jo for the coup de grâce.

**The Chair:** In particular, what are the solutions to this problem?

**Nigel Huddleston:** The solution is that we find a way, a mechanism, to open up school facilities for post-school sport and to communities, as I alluded to earlier. The problem that you identified I am hearing all over the place. In particular, I think it is an inhibitor to women's sports games. By the time they get to trying to book a field, the men's teams have already hogged it, yet just over the other side of the fence there is a perfectly reasonable field available for them to use if it was open, so we are aware of the problem.

The solution sounds like, "Let's just open them up". I am sure, as Nick will say in a minute, that the problem is not as simple as that. We have duty-of-care responsibilities. There are physical and infrastructure challenges. We are also seeing—it goes back to the governing bodies—that the private sector would also be willing to come in here. A lot of entities want to use the facilities, and they would be happy to pay for them, so I think there is a solution there.

This was a manifesto commitment, as Nick and I said earlier. We have made some baby steps in this area and we are sincerely committed to making sure that we do more here, as well as additional facilities—the broader issue with facilities. That was a manifesto commitment for more sport facilities as part of our World Cup bid. They are focused on football, but they are 40% also for mixed sport facilities. The first tranche of that was announced in the Budget, but we will be going more along those lines as well. You are right that we cannot encourage people to participate in sport without the facilities being there, and we need more.

**Lord Addington:** Department for Education, what would you say to that?

**Nick Gibb:** Yes, there are challenges and barriers, such as the ownership of playing fields and so on. We piloted this back in 2020 with £1.6 million,

and we piloted it with 23 active partnerships, working with about 230 primary and secondary schools to identify those barriers. There are things like making sure that the changing rooms are compliant to enable disabled children to come in, if those adaptations have not already been made, and so on. There are health and safety issues, and issues of the ownership of land, and we have learned through that.

They also learned how to develop links with the local community. That came out of that pilot. Based on that, we then allocated £10.1 million and we are now expanding it to all 42 of the active partnerships around the country. This is a major initiative to open up assets that lie silent after the school day finishes and to make them available to the local community. It is a great initiative, and I think it will pay huge dividends in terms of getting more people in the community active.

**Lord Addington:** Small clubs that are the bedrock of this use, informal and formal, have limited capacity when it comes to paperwork and bureaucracy. What are you doing to make sure that they can get at these easily? If you say, "You can go to the website and get form B", they will just say, "Get lost". Anybody else would and these are volunteers. What are you doing to make it easier?

**Nick Gibb:** That is what we learned from the pilot about forging those links. Human beings talking to other human beings is what came out of the pilot. I hope and expect that the expansion of this programme will expand those human-to-human links and that it will not be simply, "The computer says you don't qualify. Fill in this 23-page form", because we have learned this; we have given guidance to schools about how to navigate the system. We will have to suck it and see how the community and the clubs are taking up this offer.

**Lord Addington:** But you are putting in an active way of making sure that the clubs or the governing bodies, call them what you like, know that you have this facility here and that it is manageable when they need it.

**Nick Gibb:** What we are hearing back is that schools are saying that this programme is resulting in them rebuilding those community links. It is about word of mouth. It is about talking to the captain of the local rugby club or the secretary of the local football club about building those links, as well as to the voluntary groups that run the weekend football tournaments for young people who sometimes struggle to find facilities. It is about word of mouth and using those local community links. From the reports I am getting, that is what is happening as a consequence of this programme. We will listen and learn as we roll this out across the country.

**Jo Churchill:** As a local MP, I had locally driven a scheme like this, because I had a similar feeling. Nick and Nigel know that I have beaten a path to their door, and I will carry on doing that. However, Nick is totally right that it is the human relationships. I also had to have the local council at the table, because you will be talking about new housing developments, cycle paths, reconfiguring the town and how you



communicate. I have rugby clubs, cricket clubs, football clubs, athletics, netball, some of the things for the older members of our community, walking football and so on.

You can do a lot if you can get hold of the asset, and the asset is where you play these things. This is work in progress that we will work on together, because from a health perspective we need to rebuild. We know that activity levels have fallen away. We know that in building that resilience we build human capital and social capital. We need to use our natural capital and make sure that we get all that put together so that people can be active when they need to. We know that it hits disadvantaged groups, ethnic minorities and disabled members of the community. Everybody would love to enjoy more sport, and sport can improve health, behaviour, confidence and social skills. It helps concentration and it helps learning, so why would we not see it as a priority?

**Lord Addington:** I have many more questions, but it is time up.

**The Chair:** That is a very good way, Jo, to end this session. Thank you, Jo Churchill, the Minister for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care, Nigel Huddleston, the Minister for Sport and Tourism, and the right honourable Nick Gibb, the Minister for School Standards at the DfE. Thank you all very much indeed. This is our last session. We have enjoyed your company very much. I hope you have enjoyed the questions that we put to you.

I thank the committee again very much for your sterling efforts. We will now go and watch a huge success tonight, as England play somebody else, and we will bring the football home. Thank you very much.