



Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

Oral evidence: Sport governance, HC 855

Tuesday 16 November 2021

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Members present: Julian Knight (Chair); Kevin Brennan; Steve Brine; Alex Davies-Jones; Clive Efford; Julie Elliott; Damian Green; Simon Jupp; John Nicolson; Giles Watling.

Questions 1 - 212

Witnesses

I: Azeem Rafiq, former Yorkshire cricketer.

II: Roger Hutton, former Chair, Yorkshire County Cricket Club; and Lord Patel of Bradford, Chair, Yorkshire County Cricket Club.

III: Tom Harrison, Chief Executive Officer, England and Wales Cricket Board; Kate Miller, Chief Diversity and Communications Officer, England and Wales Cricket Board; Meena Botros, Director of Legal and Integrity, England and Wales Cricket Board; and Alan Dickinson, Non-Executive Director, England and Wales Cricket Board.



Examination of witness

Witness: Azeem Rafiq.

Q1 **Chair:** This the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee's hearing into racism in Yorkshire cricket. For our first witness today we are joined by Mr Azeem Rafiq, who is a former Yorkshire player and wishes to talk to us about his experience at the Yorkshire County Cricket Club. Thank you for joining us, Azeem.

Some housekeeping, first of all. We have invited many of the witnesses who have been mentioned in press reports and also will undoubtedly be mentioned during the course of this session. We have had widespread refusals of witnesses. However, there are some who may be mentioned whom we have not invited and who have given no indication they would like to be invited. What we would say to them is very simple. If they find there is anything they wish to answer as a result of any statement made in this session, they can write to the Committee and that will form part of our evidence as we move forward to a report stage.

I would also remind everyone in the public gallery that there is to be quiet during proceedings as we are asking our questions.

We have declarations of interest. Damian Green.

Damian Green: I am a member of the MCC and Surrey County Cricket Club.

Chair: I declare that I am the Chair of the Lords and Commons Cricket Club. I also attended events as part of the events research programme with the ECB and with Surrey County Cricket Club.

Good morning, Mr Rafiq. Thank you very much for joining us. Please tell us in your own words what you think went wrong at Yorkshire County Cricket Club for you.

Azeem Rafiq: First of all, thanks for giving me this opportunity to talk about my story and what I went through over a long period of time at the club.

I was a young kid from Pakistan, living in Barnsley, with a dream to represent England. Pretty early on at the club, I joined a dressing room full of my heroes—Michael Vaughan, Matthew Hoggard, part of the 2005 Ashes team—and it was just the most surreal moment for me when I entered that dressing room.

Pretty early on for me and other people from Asian backgrounds there were comments such as, "You lot sit over there near the toilets," "elephant washers" and the word "Paki" was used constantly. There just seemed to be an acceptance in the institution from the leaders and no one ever stamped it out. To be honest, all I wanted to do is play cricket and play cricket for England, live my dream and live my family's dream.



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In my first spell, I don't really think I quite realised what it was. I think I was in denial. I looked the other way, just like everyone else did, because for me playing cricket was the most important thing. Towards the end of my first spell, but constantly throughout it, I knew there was something wrong, but I couldn't quite put my finger on what was wrong. I started taking medication for my mental health, and it was tough, really tough.

I left the club in 2014. Instead of looking at those things I went away and tried to work on myself, my game and my mental health. I felt like I did that, and then I got an opportunity, through my performances being above and beyond everyone else, to get back at the club, and because they had struggled to replace me, quite frankly. Adil Rashid had gone to play for England and they could not replace me.

The first few months I came back, I thought, "You know what, things have changed here, it is a little bit different." Alex Lees was the captain. He was a friend and a good person, and I know he had personal tragedies himself at a young age so he understood me. There was Jason Gillespie, who was an Australian cricketer and coach, who I felt supported by. Jason left at the end of 2016 and it felt like the temperature in the room had just been turned up. You had Andrew Gale coming in as coach and Gary Ballance as captain. For me, these guys were Yorkshire through and through, and, as they call it, the white rose values were embedded in them. For the first time I started to see it for what it was. I felt isolated, humiliated at times, there was the constant use of the word "Paki".

In the 2017 preseason tour we were in a place and Gary Ballance walks over and goes, "Why are you talking to him? You know he's a Paki," or, "He's not a sheikh, he's got no oil." This happened in front of teammates; it happened in front of coaching staff. We were on a bus trip in London to the Surrey game and we went past a couple of men with beards and it was like, "Oh, is that your dad?" If we went past a corner shop, "Does your uncle own this?" This happened in front of, again, Martyn Moxon, Andrew Gale, club officials, and it never got stamped out. Everyone saw it, but because of the institution and the environment, it became such a norm in there that I don't think anyone thought there was anything wrong with it. That is probably why some people do not even remember it.

At the end of 2017, we had a difficult pregnancy, and through that time the treatment that I received from some of the club officials was inhumane. They were not really bothered about the fact that I was at training one day and I get a phone call to say there is no heartbeat— Sorry.

Q2 Chair: It is all right, take your time, Mr Rafiq. If you need to break at any moment, please just let me know. There are no hard deadlines today.

I was quite interested by your comment there about Mr Ballance. He made great store in his statement where he issued an apology over the fact you were friends. You mentioned as well in the report that you went



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to have dinner with his family in Harare, I think. He suggested basically it was a banter angle to the use of the "P" word. In your second spell at Yorkshire, were you and Mr Ballance friends? If not, did he use the "P" word during your second spell?

Azeem Rafiq: Yes, 2017 pre-season tour and throughout really. It is interesting. I want to address Gary's statement because there was a narrative there that we were the best of mates, we had a really good relationship. When Gary came to the club from Derby, I saw in him what I saw in myself and that was outsiders. A lot of the players at the time called Gary a lot of things, which were completely out of order, but again, it was such a norm that no one said anything.

Mine and Gary's relationship started to deteriorate around 2013 due to Gary's conduct. At one point his behaviour around his personal relationships was so disgusting that I raised it with an agent that we shared and said, "This needs to be sorted out before it gets quite silly." Even after that we were amicable, we were teammates, but we never shared the same relationship.

2017 onwards, initially when Gary took over as captain he found it a real struggle. Steve Patterson, a senior player, got left out pretty early on and he got the whole dressing room fighting. It was toxic in a lot of ways. I tried to help Gary and the team, but in the end it became evident that even though Steve had caused a lot of issues, I was going to be the one who got picked on. Six or seven players made a complaint about Tim Bresnan that year, but I was the only one who got the repercussions of that and I was the only person of colour.

Q3 **Chair:** I am sorry to keep putting questions. In my reading of your witness statement, and also the report more generally—it is quite a difficult read due to the way it is constructed—effectively the attitude of Yorkshire changed almost like a light switch going off the moment you made a complaint about racial harassment. Is that correct?

Azeem Rafiq: I first raised it as bullying in 2017. I have now seen board minutes a month before and it calls me as the leader, potential captain, driver on the field, someone we potentially should build a team around, especially in white ball cricket. I raised that complaint about Tim Bresnan—Tim, former England cricketer and also related to the coach. I knew there was potentially going to be real trouble, but I thought if everyone complains it will be the same for everyone, but on the flip side of it the board minutes say I am a problem, a troublemaker and an issue that needs to be resolved.

I feel that that then blinded them to how they treated me through the pregnancy and the loss of my son. On my first day back after losing my son, Martyn Moxon literally got me in a room and ripped the shreds off me. I have never seen him speak to anyone like that through my time at the club. I couldn't believe it.



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I raised complaints at the time through the internal reporting mechanism. I raised it with the National Asian Cricket Council. I raised it with the PCA and with my PDM, personal development manager, who I thought was on my side until I read the internal emails. I raised it with the inclusivity and diversity board member, Hanif Malik. I went to his house and literally cried my eyes out. He said to me that he was going to deal with this and he does not need the job. Four days later, I got a message from him that he is going to let Mark Arthur know that I have been, just to be transparent. The subject data access request actually showed that the minute I left his house, he rang Mark and informed him of everything before the meeting I had with Mark the next day.

Q4 Chair: In terms of the handling of your complaint, obviously there are huge issues there in the internal handling, the fact that your identity was revealed to the individual you were complaining about presumably, which is against practice. What are your views about the report and the way in which it is structured? I understand it was a law firm that Mr Hutton, I believe, used to work for that conducted the inquiry, and then some members of the panel that oversaw that inquiry had to step down, so three members were left. Reading the report, it is a Venn diagram of stupidity in the way in which it is structured. You have moments in which hearsay is effectively given—for example, “Zimbo” is presumed to be racist while the “P” word is not. That is an example of the thinking that goes on in this report and the way in which it also tends to have the panel contradicting the law firm and vice versa. What is your view about how that was handled? What did you think when you first clapped eyes on it?

Azeem Rafiq: I only got it a week ago. It seems like some people who had been accused and stuff was upheld against got my stuff before I even got it, and they used the platform at *The Daily Telegraph* to show the world that. From the outset, what I wanted to do is try to talk about the institution, try to talk about what I went through and try to present my evidence in a way that it can be seen as, “Look, there are things that are not right and we can really all learn from it.” What has happened to me has happened. It will never change, but my aim was to try to see if my experience can help others.

Clearly, the words “institutional racism” are something no one wants to be associated with. The lawyers, Squire Patton Boggs, having a connection with Roger from the offset sets you on a bad road. They were brilliant, they were lovely at the start—so respectful, wanted to hear everything I had to say. The panel was led by a surgeon. Again, as soon as they got my evidence it felt like they were like, “Wow, we have a problem here.” Suddenly, it felt like it went away from the institutional and, working with the club, they tried to make it about individuals. That is why, unfortunately, in the last couple of weeks some individuals have had a really tough time. I did not present my evidence like that. It was never intended like that and that was never the allegation, but that is what the club, the lawyers and the panel in particular have tried to do.



To make one thing very clear, “Paki” is not banter, racism is not banter. I think there were three people of colour on that panel and one of them was associated with the National Asian Cricket Council and CEO of London Tigers, an award-winning charity organisation working with rugby and football clubs. For him to come out and do an article where he stands by the finding that “Paki” was used as banter just shows the scale of the problem we have.

Q5 Chair: In the report, mention is made of your drinking, that you were a heavy drinker during your time at Yorkshire. What is your view of them linking your claims of harassment to your drinking?

Azeem Rafiq: I have been clear from the offset that I was not perfect. There are things I did that I felt I had to do to fit in and try to achieve my dreams, and I am not proud of them. It is something I deeply regret but it has no relation to racism. I should have never ever been treated the way I was treated. When I spoke I should have been listened to, but Yorkshire County Cricket Club and the game as a whole, has a problem in listening to the victim. It has been, “Yeah, but...” but there is no “Yeah, but” to racism. There is no two sides to a story when it comes to racism.

Q6 Chair: Were you ever forced to drink alcohol before you were 18 by other people at the club? How do you view the harassment you suffered for answering the call for prayer?

Azeem Rafiq: In my first instance of drinking, I actually got pinned down at my local cricket club and red wine was poured down my throat.

Q7 Chair: How old were you?

Azeem Rafiq: Fifteen.

Q8 Chair: You are a Muslim, 15—

Azeem Rafiq: Fifteen years old. It was literally down my throat. The player played for Yorkshire, played for Hampshire, and yes, it was quite an experience. I didn’t touch alcohol until about 2012, and around that time I felt like I had to do that to fit in. Like I said, I regret that massively. Again, that has no bearing on the things that I was called. Around the loss of my son, the attitude of Andrew Gale, the coach, saying to me that I am making it more than what it is before the loss. After the loss, hardly ever anyone said, “Mate, are you all right? Is your wife all right?” It was all about, “Well, he raised bullying last year. Before he raises something big let’s get rid of him.”

Q9 Chair: And the harassment over the call to prayer as well that you have seen?

Azeem Rafiq: Yes, obviously me, myself, I don’t remember having that, but I know certain other people—I have seen another player fasting, for example, and if he made a mistake while fasting, the strength and fitness conditioning coach, the physio, coaches and fellow players would be



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blaming him for any mistakes he made as opposed to understanding that—

Chair: That is at Yorkshire?

Azeem Rafiq: That is at Yorkshire, yes.

Q10 **Chair:** Tell us about Kevin and Steve and what those names signify in Yorkshire cricket?

Azeem Rafiq: Once I left the club, Cheteshwar Pujara joined the club and Jack Brooks, I think, started it where he didn't feel the need to call him by his first name. There is an interview with Cheteshwar where he said, "I would prefer them not to." Not only did Jack, the coaches, everyone else, the media, *The Yorkshire Post*, the Yorkshire website, the Yorkshire Twitter page, everyone called him that—commentators around the world, some high-profile people. It just shows, again, the institutional failings and what that environment showed people as to how they could behave. That was the "Steve" point.

"Kevin" was something Gary used to describe everyone of colour in a very derogatory manner, whether that be publicly, in the dressing room or opposition. This is an open secret within the England dressing room. Anyone who has come across Gary would know that that is the phrase he used to describe people of colour. It was used in a derogatory manner all the time.

Q11 **Chair:** You are saying there that in the England dressing room they used the name "Kevin" to signify of people of Afro-Caribbean origin, is that correct?

Azeem Rafiq: Anyone of colour.

Chair: Anyone of colour?

Azeem Rafiq: Anyone of colour.

Q12 **Chair:** Is it true that there is an England cricketer who named his black dog "Kevin" as an in-joke?

Azeem Rafiq: Yes, that is true because Gary and Alex Hales at the time got really close to each other, when they played for England together,; that is my understanding. Obviously, I was not present in that dressing room but that is what I understand: Alex went on to name his dog Kevin because it was black.

Q13 **Chair:** How do you view that?

Azeem Rafiq: It is disgusting, to be honest, how much of a joke it was. As I said, until right at the end I was in complete denial of what was going on. It was only around the back end of 2017, when I lost my son, I went, "You know what, hold on a minute. I have seen other players have family tragedies and get support beyond measure and I have just carried my son from the hospital to the graveyard, and how I am getting treated



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here is not right.” To me it became very clear that even I had been looking the other way. There is a real problem here—not just in Yorkshire; throughout the country—and I am going to be the one to speak about this.

Q14 Chair: Azeem, you have just mentioned that it is not just Yorkshire. We have seen reports of instances in Essex very recently and rumours always fly around about other clubs as well. Would it be fair to say that what you have seen in Yorkshire, on the grapevine, effectively, is replicated in other counties?

Azeem Rafiq: Without a shadow of a doubt. This is a problem up and down the country. I would like to see it as progress that people are feeling like they can come forward and they are going to be heard and not just be discredited, smeared about, briefed about. I would see that as progress.

If you look at the stats, specifically British Asian representation in professional cricket since 2010 has had a drop of nearly 40%. The recreational game has over 30% representation from the British Asian and that drops to a mere 4% at professional level. You can do all the PR initiatives that ECB, PCA and counties do and tell everyone how great you are, or you can actually look into the problem.

Within our community, the problem is not at recreational level because we love the game, we want to play the game, but when we get to 16, 17, 18 and we have to go from academy to the professional game, everything that I have spoken about is a challenge. I would hope some pretty smart people running the game would be able to look at that, but it seems to me that whenever there is an initiative, whenever there is anything, it goes right to the grassroots because that box is already ticked and they can tell everyone how great they have been.

There was a south Asian action plan, which I actually launched on Sky for the ECB. I think initiatives like that are box ticking, a lot of tokenism, which is setting us back and it does not deal with the issue, which is in the dressing room, on the ground. Up until now no one has felt like they can come forward and talk about it because when you do it is all about, “He is a problem, he is a troublemaker, it is all him.”

Q15 Chair: That is very powerful stuff. In terms of what you think should be done specifically, obviously there is that enormous drop-off of south Asian youths and you end up with 85%, I believe, of young people at Bradford Park Avenue nets with a south Asian background, yet how many cricketers have represented Yorkshire from a south Asian background?

Azeem Rafiq: Recently, no one. Currently, Adil Rashid is the only British-born member on the Yorkshire staff. It is scary. You get this throughout the country. You challenge someone from Birmingham and they say, “Yes, 50% of our academy is south Asian.” That makes it even



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worse. It is clear the problem is there. Everyone has known it for a very long time. It has been an open secret.

As I have seen over the last 15 months, if you speak out, your life is going to be made hell. There is no doubt my life—I sat on national TV and talked about the dark places this whole episode has got me into. What has happened since then? Denial, briefings, cover-ups, smearing. High-profile media people messaging other members of the media who have supported me saying stuff like, “The clubhouse is the lifeblood of a club and Asian players do not go in there. Getting subs out of Asian players is like getting blood out of stone.”

Then this guy who does not even know me, has never spent any time with me, is talking about my personal drinking, going out and socialising—

Chair: Is that Mr Pugh in his article?

Azeem Rafiq: No, that was David Lloyd. He has been an England coach, a commentator. I found it disturbing because Sky is supposedly doing this amazing work on bringing the racism to the front, and within a week of me speaking out that is what I got sent to me. I thought, “There are some closet racists and we need to do something about it.”

Chair: That is very telling, isn’t it? We all remember the image of the England team ensuring that Moeen Ali was not covered in champagne at the celebration, and there we have you at 15 years-old being abused by them pinning you down and pouring wine down your neck as some sort of banter. I think that says everything in terms of what actually is reality and what is pretence.

Q16 **Simon Jupp:** Thank you for your testimony so far this morning. You mentioned feeling an element of denial, the impact on your mental health, feeling like you have to look the other way. I want to talk about the timing of what you have been through. You left Yorkshire cricket in 2018 and went public with your concerns in 2020. Why that delay? Was that because of the mental health issues you were facing? What was that like?

Azeem Rafiq: At the time when I left I had four or five months left on my contract. I was encouraged to sign a confidentiality form and take a sum of money, which I refused. At that time that would have been a lot of money for me. I knew my wife was struggling; I knew I was struggling. There is no way mentally I could have even considered putting myself through this trauma. I left the country. I went to Pakistan and never wanted to come back.

Q17 **Simon Jupp:** Take your time, don’t worry. How did you summon the strength to do this, then? You have been exceptionally brave coming forward and saying what you have said, and I know how difficult that would have been with the amount of media attention you have had and



everything else. How did you summon the strength to do this?

Azeem Rafiq: I don't know. I have a bit of Karachi and bit of Barnsley in me. I know that the pain that I went through for those few months, no one can ever, ever put me through that pain again.

I had an interview about my new business. I got asked a question and I got emotional—I said everything. Even at that point I genuinely thought that there might be some humanity left in some of these individuals, but no. The initial response was, "He is not talking about Yorkshire, he has not mentioned them." Then it was just all about discredit, discredit, discredit. I don't know how I have done it, I really don't. This process over the last 14 months has been difficult in a lot of ways. I have kept myself and my wife—

Chair: Would you like to take a break, Mr Rafiq, for a minute or two?

Azeem Rafiq: Please.

Chair: We will adjourn for five minutes.

Sitting suspended.

On resuming—

Chair: We will resume the questioning with Simon Jupp.

Q18 **Simon Jupp:** You are very prominent on social media nowadays. With the Chair's questioning we have talked about the response from the media as a whole. How have you found the response on social media to what you have been saying publicly over the last weeks and months?

Azeem Rafiq: Interest in social media has been—just finishing off where I was, all I wanted was an acceptance, an apology, an understanding and let's try to work together to make sure it never happens again. When I raised a complaint again it was a complete denial. I was very lucky to be supported by certain members of the press, but in the winter months it was not news again and I felt that social media was my voice. I felt very determined that I was not going to let this go. No matter how much damage it caused me, which I think we will only find out in four or five years' time, I was very determined to become a voice for the voiceless.

I had a lot of messages from parents, from kids as young as 15, throughout the country. A professional player messaged me saying, "You have just done what we have all wanted to do but never had the balls to do it." I felt like I had a responsibility. Social media comes with a negative side as well. My family has been abused, I have been abused. It



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is fine, I can take it and I will take it because it is something I believe in and am incredibly passionate about.

I feel if Yorkshire had seen this as an opportunity to become the leaders in this space, seen this as an opportunity to make a real difference in society and the game, this could have gone in a completely different direction. But they did not do that and that is why we are where we are. It comes with the platform that I have now, but it is important that I have that responsibility and I continue to fulfil that for people who are not being heard, and there are plenty of them.

Q19 Simon Jupp: Has that abuse you have seen on social media gone too far in any way?

Azeem Rafiq: Yes, at times. These last two weeks, when the whole thing has just blown to a new level, I have been told to go back to my roots; if I do not like it go back to where I came from. It hurts. What I do want to put on record is that I am very thankful for all the support I received because I received a lot of support on social media. There are a lot of good people out there. But it is human nature; you always pick up the negative ones and they have been hurtful.

Simon Jupp: It is worthwhile never reading your notifications on Twitter.

Q20 Damian Green: You paint a terrible picture of life in the Yorkshire dressing room and around the club, perhaps particularly in your younger years. Why did you go back there after you had left once?

Azeem Rafiq: I am glad you have asked me this because it is something I have been asked a lot on social media. In my first spell there were instances that happened that I did not see for what they were. I was in denial. Like I said, I knew there was something that was not right, but I did not quite know what it was. To go with that, why did I go back? To be honest, at the start of 2016 I started well. I was training with Derbyshire, but they did not have the finances to offer me a contract and I was in a position where putting food on the table was difficult. I genuinely had no other option but to go and try to fulfil not only my dream but my family's dream. That is just the honest reason why I went back. More importantly, I think I was in denial right up to 2017.

One thing I want to talk about is that for a person of colour to start accepting that you are being treated differently because of your race or religion is quite a tough thing to take, because after that you are always like, "Why?" You just want answers, but you never get answers. I did not want to believe it but when it became evident around the loss of my son I was like I can't keep looking the other way. I have to speak about this. That is the situation.

Q21 Damian Green: So you almost went back knowing that there was this niggling problem that you needed to confront?



Azeem Rafiq: Not really. Like I said, until 2017 I did not really know it for what it was. I was in denial. This is how I presented my evidence as well. The thing for me was right at the end—the last year and a half—and then when I presented my evidence I talked about instances that took place throughout my time, which show it as institutional. Right up to 2017 I did not believe it and nor did I ever want to believe it and even look at the issue to what it was. Even in 2017 I reported it as bullying because for me to believe that I was being treated in this way because of my colour or race was quite a difficult thing to digest. It affects me to this day.

Q22 **Damian Green:** You say it is institutional in Yorkshire. Do you think it is institutional in cricket more widely?

Azeem Rafiq: Yes, I do.

Q23 **Damian Green:** Is that from experience when you obviously played other counties or when you were playing club cricket? It infuses the whole game, does it?

Azeem Rafiq: We rely a lot on data in today's society and that would back it up. I think of other people's experiences now and I know, off the record, that I have had enough people talk about experiences up and down the country that it is not just at Yorkshire. The ECB has to take a bit of responsibility as well. It is all well and good everyone throwing the book at Yorkshire; it is still my club. Whether people believe it or not I still have a sense of wanting to make sure that it is not just everyone throws a book at Yorkshire, because this is a problem up and down the country.

It is ECB's game. They are the regulators. It is their funding and their actions in the last few years of the T-shirts, even around taking the knee, they were one of the first sporting teams that have just stopped. Whatever people's opinions are on that, it would have kept the conversation going. I think ECB needs to take a lot of responsibility and bring a lot of things in-house and stop palming off responsibility to advisory bodies such as the National Asian Cricket Council because all I see that as is the start of separation, that, "South Asians can deal with them, we will deal with everyone else".

Q24 **Damian Green:** You think in other particularly urban counties—it is a contradiction in terms—the big urban areas where there will be a large concentration of young cricketers in minorities, that there is still the kind of casual unthinking racism that you describe so eloquently all over the place and that is why the stats are as they are? Do you think that is the root of it?

Azeem Rafiq: That is the problem, that my experience is not just limited to me. That is the problem but that is a problem that ECB, the PCA and the counties have never wanted to deal with. I would like an answer for that because they have enough evidence there to show them that that is a problem. Is it that they have never wanted to deal with that problem



because they do not want representation from the south Asian community and on what it should be from the talent that comes out from there? That is an answer for them.

Q25 Damian Green: I have one final question about Yorkshire. I take the point that you want to talk about the institution rather than the individuals, but recently Joe Root has said in response to this that he can say that at no stage has he heard any racist conversations in the dressing room or around Yorkshire. Do you find that statement credible?

Azeem Rafiq: To be clear, Root is a good man. He has never engaged in racist language. I found it hurtful because Rooty was not only Gary's housemate, Rooty was involved, before he started playing cricket, when he was involved in a lot of those socialising nights out where I have been called a Paki. Again, it just shows—and he might not remember it—how normal it was in that environment, in that institution, that even a good man like him does not see it for what it is. It was strange but, like I said, it is the environment of the institution that made it such a norm that people do not remember it. It is not going to affect Joe. It is something I remember every day but I do not expect Joe to.

Q26 Kevin Brennan: Thank you, Mr Rafiq, for your testimony this morning. I had no idea that "Kevin" was a term that could be used as racial abuse. When did that start and how prevalent and widespread is that in cricket?

Azeem Rafiq: It is a term that is used by Gary. Gary started this term. Even I do not have knowledge of where and how but it was something used in a derogatory manner for people of colour.

Q27 Kevin Brennan: You mentioned earlier on that Gary Ballance was someone who displayed—in the phrase you used—"white rose values". Did you mean that in a derogatory way when you said that? What did you mean by that?

Azeem Rafiq: A couple of days ago I saw that 14 members of the staff signed a letter to the board a month ago that they should have come out and discredited me and attacked me for my personal behaviours, and that I did not share the white rose values. If the white rose values means that you are racist, then I did not share those values.

The institution, whether it wants to accept it or not, there is enough. Imran Khan in 1999 talked about it. Terry Rooney, an MP in 2004, talked about it. It has been an open secret. We have a statement from someone as far as 30 years back. We have had someone speak to us off the record and nearly come forward a couple of times about incidents in 1992 that involve people who are coaches now but they were players then. I do not know what the white rose values are, but if they involve racism I do not share them.

Q28 Kevin Brennan: Obviously, Gary Ballance has issued an apology about his behaviour saying—I think this was the phrase he used—it was a friendly verbal attack. What do you make of that?



Azeem Rafiq: First, I did not see that Gary apologised in that statement. Like I said, this panel and the lawyers and Yorkshire hierarchy have made this about individuals. I want to make sure that it does not become about that. Even on the day that Gary got named, I tried for him not to get named because I knew once people started getting named it would become an uncomfortable place for a lot of people. Individuals are going to have a tough time, but the responsibility here, and for where we are at, is in the hands of Yorkshire chief executive Mark Arthur, Martyn Moxon, the lawyers, Squire Patton Boggs, and I think the panel. As people have read the report, it is staggering. There are a lot of things in there that beggar belief and I hope the report can be published so not only the people who were perpetrators but the people who have excused this sort of behaviour can be held accountable.

Q29 **Kevin Brennan:** On that point about individuals, Michael Vaughan has said that his reputation is being trashed unfairly. What is your reaction to that?

Azeem Rafiq: It is important on Michael that we do not make it all about Michael. It was a long time ago. Michael might not remember it, as I said earlier, because it does not mean anything to him. But three of us—myself, Adil and Rana—we remember it. I spoke to Adil at length about this. Michael used his platform at *The Daily Telegraph* to try to discredit before anything had even been spoken about.

Again, he clearly had a snippet of my statement. I was promised that when I make allegations about people it will be put to them and when the allegations are made about me it will be put to me. That process was not followed for me so he used his platform at *The Daily Telegraph* to tell everyone that he had not said these things. But then to go on and put a snippet of my statement out and then talk about other things I thought was completely wrong. Like I said, he probably does not remember it because it does not mean anything to him.

Q30 **Kevin Brennan:** You referenced the report, and although we are not publishing the report on advice, what was of interest to me was that the terms of reference originally were changed halfway through to stop the law firm from making a finding on whether the Yorkshire Cricket Club is institutionally racist. Did you notice that when you read the report and do you have a view about that, as to why that might have happened? It is obviously a question we can put to others as well. I just wondered what your view was on it.

Azeem Rafiq: I noticed it when I got the report. Interestingly, I did not find out through the process. Throughout this whole process, I think they had this feeling that—like it happens generally when someone talks about their feelings and stuff on subjects that are uncomfortable—it is difficult to prove. The problem is that big at Yorkshire that they did not even care. There are internal e-mails to back up my stuff. There are board minutes. When I presented my evidence I felt like straightaway they were, "Right, we have a problem here. How do we take it in a completely



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different angle?" I think that is what they have tried to do. An international law firm apparently struggled to spell the name Will Quinn properly and that was the reason for one of the delays. The whole thing is staggering.

The last e-mail we had from Dr Samir Pathak was explaining to us what would happen next. We e-mailed him. To this day we do not have a response. I feel like there are three facets to this: my career and what happened; this independent investigation, which has been far from independent; and then the cover-up. To say that members of the panel, while this investigation was live, were being entertained by Yorkshire County Cricket Club at the test match at Headingley just shows the arrogance of these people that they felt so untouchable—"That little old Azeem Rafiq, no one is going to believe him and we will just discredit him."

Q31 Kevin Brennan: Finally, you may not be able to answer this because I realise I am talking about a third person, but one of my constituents wrote to me and said they had been writing a book, which has a chapter on the subject of discrimination in sport and in cricket, and that one of the people they interviewed was your sister, Amna, who has done work for Leicestershire Cricket Club. Have you spoken to her about the work that she has done there? Is there evidence through that work of this being a much wider problem in cricket?

Azeem Rafiq: My family did not know what I was going through until last year when I did the Sky interview. They were not aware of it. I have spoken to Amna at length since and then she has opened up about her experiences at Leicester. I have no doubt whatsoever this is a problem up and down the country.

Leicester specifically has a massive Asian community and hardly any representation. They have had the first British Asian chief executive for a few years in Wasim Khan. From everyone I have spoken to, that did more damage. Unfortunately, it is a fear of the institution, or whatever it is, within our own community. I have not shied away from saying the truth even when it has been difficult to hear, whether it is for myself, my own community or my family. Throughout this whole process my own community and a lot of businesses in Bradford had been helping Yorkshire try to cover up for whatever reason, whether that is fear of the institution or wanting to progress themselves. It just shows how difficult this issue is and how big the problem is.

If people had have taken Terry Rooney's experience in 2004 or Imran Khan a bit more as a, "Let's learn from it and let's make proper change," we would not be here today. Unfortunately, as it has shown over the last 15 months, people just do not want to listen. It is uncomfortable. Good people who are not racist want to look the other way.

Chair: Just to clarify, we will be publishing your witness statement to the Committee in full at the end of this hearing. We are not choosing to put



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the report. Frankly, it is Yorkshire's mess. They should be the ones publishing this report and explaining themselves rather than hoping that our Committee will do it for them so they do not get sued. To be very clear, every word you have put in your witness statement will be in the public domain at the end of this session.

Azeem Rafiq: Thank you.

Q32 **Clive Efford:** Thanks for coming to give evidence today, Azeem. You have mentioned that you do not want this to be just a Yorkshire issue; you think it is wider in the game. You have just answered that you think there are issues at Leicestershire, for instance. You went to Derby for a period where you seemed to have had a happy experience. Could you just tell us a little bit about what your experience there was and how widespread you feel that this problem is within the game of cricket and beyond? Other sports like football have similar problems in the higher echelons of football and we do not see the representation that we do on the pitch. What are your comments?

Azeem Rafiq: I had the most enjoyable month on loan at Derby. From the minute I got there the captain and the coach made me feel welcomed, valued. I have nothing but good words to say about my time at Derby, but it was only a short time. I do not know what the dealings are below that level but representation again there is short. I cannot speak highly enough of my little stint there for a month.

Q33 **Clive Efford:** In Yorkshire there is a whole hierarchy of cricket that has been set up around south Asian cricketers because of the ceiling that there was, the lack of opportunity to get through into first-class cricket. Is that different from other counties in your experience or is there something peculiar to Yorkshire?

Azeem Rafiq: I am sorry, I did not understand your question.

Clive Efford: In the sense that there is a whole pyramid of cricket within Yorkshire around south Asian cricketers and set up by them over the last 50 years. That seems to have been set up because there was a lack of opportunity to get into first-class cricket. In your knowledge, is that commonplace in cricket or is that peculiar to Yorkshire?

Azeem Rafiq: I think you mean the leagues that have been set up. I don't think they help, but people just got sick and tired of not being given opportunities and the problem is not dealt with. This is where the ECB needs to take control because we had a situation over the winter where, coincidentally, my local club, Barnsley, and its chairman described an overseas player from the West Indies from another player, and he put on Facebook that, "This guy was selling sunglasses to me in Tenerife." The problem is right at the bottom and it needs the ECB to look where its money is going and make sure that people responsible for young kids coming into the game at an early age are educated for what is right and wrong. For too long the ECB has not done enough.



Q34 **Clive Efford:** Can I just ask you about the ECB because this whole situation in Yorkshire has been in the open for quite some time? Were you approached at all by the ECB when you made your complaints known?

Azeem Rafiq: When George Dobell published his article I had a phone call from Tom Harrison; subsequently, I had a Zoom call with him. I felt like he was listening but then they took the stance that they are going to trust Yorkshire to do the right thing, and then as regulators come in to hold Yorkshire to account. Constitutionally, I do not know how that works, but it was difficult for me to take through the winter because I kept begging the ECB, the PCA. The PCA kept telling me, "We agree with Yorkshire—*independent investigation.*" I am telling them, "They are not doing the right thing, they are changing processes. They are not communicating with me. This is going to end up in a car crash for everyone. Please step in."

At no point did any of the two organisations want to do that until that Monday when the article broke in the CricInfo. Once the sponsors started going and the MPs started being vocal about it, it was at that point that ECB came in. I am sure they are going to be asked this and they will have their reasons for it, but on a human point, I felt like if someone else had told me that they were suicidal and then were ringing me saying, "Please help, please help," I would forget the constitution and any regulation and I would jump straight in and go, "Right, we need to help the human," because it left me over the winter in some dark moments.

At one point the PCA called the police and reported me missing. I was sat with my family and I get a phone call saying, "You have been reported missing." I did not feel like they did that because they were concerned for me or worried about me. I felt like that was done to tick a box just in case I killed myself and they can say, "Well, we did what we could do".

Q35 **Clive Efford:** Just to clarify, you were in regular contact with the ECB after the publication of the article and you were making it clear to them what your emotional state was and there was a failure there to intervene?

Azeem Rafiq: I would not say regular but I made it very clear to them several times through the winter. I was in regular contact with the PCA. I found the PCA stance, as the Professional Cricketers' Association, incredibly inept. It was, "We have members on both sides." It was like you are protecting the perpetrators and you have no interest in where this is taking me. Throughout, PCA kept telling me, "Once the report comes out we will support you, we will stand up for right and we will make sure there are changes". Once the report came out they said, "We have no powers. We will just push the ECB." Again, an organisation that should have been there for me and supported me left me on my own and to fight on my own.

Q36 **Clive Efford:** There were a lot of people who did not respond to invites



to give evidence at the investigation. Why do you think that was?

Azeem Rafiq: Fearful; not trusting Yorkshire; they know they have done wrong, some of them; lawyers. The list could go on. That is for them to answer why they did not play a part. The way this investigation was done is best described as shoddy. As I said, an international law firm I found staggering when I heard that they could not spell "Will Quinn" properly.

To this day they have not contacted Tino Best or Rana Naved-ul-Hasan who publicly came and backed me. Age group coaches have publicly talked about being told, "Pick a few of them but not too many of them Pakis." Supporters have wanted to come forward. They have all had to go through HR at Yorkshire. Her behaviour in it all, again, is not an example that needs to be set for young people moving forward. It has been done very shoddily and I think people who have declined to play a part need to answer why.

Q37 **Clive Efford:** Do you think that Yorkshire at all made an attempt to reassure those people and get them to give evidence in this process?

Azeem Rafiq: To be honest, I do not know what Yorkshire has done. I think Yorkshire throughout has tried to discredit me, brief about me, be in denial. I do not think they have had any interest, and even as we stand now, Mark Arthur has resigned and the resignation had no remorse. It was more a CV about how he had signed a catering contract at Headingley, which again just shows the attitude of these people.

Q38 **Clive Efford:** Let me put it another way. Do you think the treatment of you is likely to encourage other people to come forward and participate in the investigation?

Azeem Rafiq: Now possibly, but for a long time through the 15 months, no. Why would you? Why would you come forward? Your family gets brought into it. Your wife gets nailed on social media. Your sister's life is made hell. Your dad is ill and suffering. Why would you?

Q39 **Clive Efford:** Given how widespread and open the racism at Yorkshire you have described, in your opinion do you think the people at the top of the cricket club could have possibly been unaware of the level of racism that was taking place in the club?

Azeem Rafiq: From the minute they come in—so people who have been there come in as 16 year-old players—they just see their seniors behave in that manner and they think that is acceptable. No one has ever said to them, "Stop." They could have had that excuse before I spoke to them but after I spoke to them there is no excuse that they were unaware. I made it perfectly clear, in as much detail as I possibly could, what I had felt and what other people had felt. Other people are still fearful of coming forward, even at Yorkshire. To say that they were unaware would be an excuse for them and we need to get away from looking for excuses for any of these individuals.



Q40 **Julie Elliott:** Thank you very much for coming and talking to us today. I want to start by quoting something back you said earlier in evidence where you said, "It is only little Azeem Rafiq, no one will believe him." Can I just say that I believe you and I am sure this Committee believes you? Do not for a second think that we do not believe you. I think most decent people in this country believe you.

You have talked a lot about some of the apologies that you clearly do not feel are real apologies that a number of people have said. You do not want to talk about individuals, and that is fair enough. Have any of the people, whether the people discussed here or the people who have given these apologies, reached out to you privately and apologised to you personally?

Azeem Rafiq: After my Sky interview, the next morning I took a phone call from Matthew Hoggard and he just basically said, "Look, I did not realise. I am really sorry if some of the comments I made made you feel the way you have described. I just want to apologise." You know what, when someone does that I was like, "Mate, thank you, really appreciate it". I bumped into a friend a few months after and he just said, "Look, we did not realise we were having that effect on you. If you had said to us we would have stopped, so I am really sorry," and I was very appreciative of the apology because that is all I wanted, an acceptance, an apology.

I would like to ask Martyn Moxon, still to this day, why he felt like that was the right thing to do after the loss of my son. Apart from that, all I have ever wanted is some sort of acceptance and apology. Let's work together to make sure it does not happen to my kids, and I can let my kids go and play cricket.

Q41 **Julie Elliott:** This Committee has looked at racism in other sports over the years I have been on this Committee and other issues, whether it is equal pay or discrimination on the grounds of gender—all sorts of issues we have tackled in sport. Part of the problem is sometimes when people are confronted if they just say, "We had no idea, we are sorry," and start to do something about it, but from what you have been saying to us today, in general, that has not happened. Tell me if I am describing this wrong, but my interpretation of what you have been telling us is they have thought, "Oh, I have a problem in that sponsors are disappearing, people are looking at us," but not acknowledging that they have a problem in the way they have been behaving and, at a senior level, the way they have been managing cricket. Do I have that right?

Azeem Rafiq: Yes, that is it. I do not think the game wants to listen, and that is the wider game. I have heard counties running around trying to ring south Asian players to see if they can offer them some roles somewhere in the hope that no one comes forward and talks about their experience. If the game, as a whole, had taken the approach of—what Lord Patel has done is a whistle-blower hotline. It wants people being listened to.



There is a quick rush to move forward. Before we move forward the game needs to listen to a lot of people who have suffered a lot of abuse up and down the country. Until it starts listening to that and hearing it as opposed to going, "Yes, but" we cannot move forward. That is the first step towards it, what Lord Patel has already put in at Yorkshire. I would encourage every county and the ECB to do the same.

- Q42 **Julie Elliott:** You are absolutely right. Can I contrast the way you have been treated at Yorkshire cricket compared to your everyday life? We know there is a problem with racism in our society. Thank goodness I do not think it is anywhere near what is going on in cricket, but there is a problem. Can you contrast your everyday life compared to what you have experienced there, what you have experienced in everyday life? It sounds to me as if this is in a completely different league. None of it is acceptable but, again, is that a fair assessment of where we are?

Azeem Rafiq: My everyday life, for as long as I have known, has just been cricket. It would be difficult for me to compare but cricket and professional sport in general is a lot worse than society. Again, the thing I hear a lot is, "Yes, but it is a societal problem." Cricket is part of the same society. If we make changes within cricket we are making changes in society. It is such a cop-out to go, "Yes, but it is a societal problem." Every one of us is responsible for the society that we live in. Instead of palming it off to other people, if we look at where cricket is where I was, cricket is where ECB is, instead of saying, "It is a societal problem, we need to solve that first," no, let's sort out where we are every day and hopefully that will have the impact in society in the long term anyway.

- Q43 **Julie Elliott:** Finally, you have mentioned PCA a few times, who should be there to protect you and give you advice and support. What do you think has gone wrong there? Clearly, it is not doing that. It is absolutely inappropriate to say we have people on either side. It is quite common in the trade union world or any representational world that you represent people on all sides, but that does not stop you representing and supporting people. It sounds to me as if they have just walked away from the problem. Could you describe a little about how the PCA has behaved?

Azeem Rafiq: The problem they had is my PDM at the time, Matthew Wood, who I thought was in my corner, was working with Yorkshire, and in communication with them. He had been a Yorkshire player in the past as well. I think it was all cosy there and that only became evident from the subject data access request. So they had an issue there.

I had a phone call with one of their lawyers for three minutes and he turned round to me and said, "You do not have a case." It was incredibly hurtful to find out later that the reason they said that is because if they had backed me it would have taken their whole budget. I would have rather he said to me, "Look, we cannot afford it," as opposed to saying, "You have no case," because what it made me feel like is no one believes you. "We do not believe you, we believe the PDM," who I thought was a



top man but obviously, like I said, what you see at the front and what is happening behind the scenes are different.

The subject data access request was probably an eye-opener for me as well. Even I did not realise how bad it was happening behind the scenes. When I spoke to them I tried to tell them what I was feeling. I had no proof but when we started getting the proof it was like, "Wow.". The inclusivity and diversity board member is talking about how to brush it, deal with it; there was literally no interest in dealing with my allegations. That is very clear. As bad as that report is, the one thing that is very clear in that report is—I think the words are—they were dismissive of my allegations and wanted to wash their hands of me.

Q44 Steve Brine: Hello, Azeem. It is a horror show what you are describing. You were asked earlier about this issue in Yorkshire and other clubs. It has come up in different questions whether it is an issue in other clubs, and you said without question. I do not suppose many of the other counties will be looking forward to this exchange. I am not asking you to name names but I am asking you to name counties.

You have put yourself out there and by doing so you then attract attention, wanted and unwanted. You also become a place around which people can feel they can talk. Have other players from other counties been in touch with you to say, "Yes, this is exactly what I am experiencing, too. I thought it was just me. I thought I was blowing it out of proportion," about some of the stuff you have said to us this morning? You said it is without question a problem anywhere else, so can you tell the Committee about that and where?

Azeem Rafiq: I have had messages from people who have played at Leicester. I have had messages from a guy who played at Middlesex. I have had messages from people who have played at Nottinghamshire. I have had messages from quite a few. Some people obviously are still pretty scared to talk about it. Some still say, "Should I have called it out? Is it racism? I don't know." I think the one recurrence is the word "Paki" was used a lot.

There was the gentleman who spoke recently about being called a bomber after 9/11. Maurice Chambers spoke out from Essex yesterday about misfielding in fielding drill and saying it was a black thing, "Eat this banana, you fucking monkey," stuff like that.

It is pretty clear it is there. Some people are still pretty scared and they are at the really early stages of their career.

Q45 Steve Brine: Some people are scared but some people are on an earlier stage of the journey. You said, "Oh, is it just bullying? Am I blowing it out of proportion?" then eventually you realised what it was. Do you find that you have become a bit of a mentor to others then who are saying, "Maybe it is just bullying, maybe I have this wrong"? Are you then able to talk to them and say—does it sound familiar? Is it eerily familiar what you



are hearing from those clubs you have mentioned?

Azeem Rafiq: I want to become the voice of the voiceless. I want to try to help people who are suffering this without it getting to a point where it has got for me. I want to help young players coming into the game, getting them ready for the challenges, but also counties to change the environments and cultures so these people can achieve their dreams.

I was not able to achieve my dream. I have tried to stay away throughout the process in talking about my cricket. With the stats and stuff around 2017 it was pretty clear that I had the ability, and with my captaincy skills, to go right to the top, but these experiences weighed down on me. The last 15 months will show that I can deal with a lot from the outside but when it is the inside it eats me and it kills me.

Some of the things that have hurt me the most have been the PCA, who I thought would be in my corner, and certain members of the south Asian community. I think it is important that now that I have been brave or stupid—whatever you want to call it—to stand up to an institution and hold them to account, I want to try to help the young lads who are wanting to achieve their dreams to prepare better, but hopefully we can get the institutions to change so they do not have to. They can be respected.

Q46 **Steve Brine:** On that thought, you gave the stats earlier about the youth game into the professional game. They are striking; they do not lie. Obviously, there is a tragedy for all those individuals who do not go from playing pretty good youth cricket, showing great promise in practising, to playing the professional game. They have missed out on that, but so have you, right? Cricket is not my game. I do not know a lot about the game of cricket, but I know you were a good cricketer. The England cricket team, for instance, what have they missed out on from not having your services and not having the services of all those thousands of other young boys and girls who maybe have been put off and not gone through to play and achieve their potential? What have we missed out on? How many more Ashes might we have won?

Azeem Rafiq: A lot of talent, a better representation of the country—we missed out on a lot, to be honest. There are a lot of Asian cricketers who have been subject to this. Not just Asian; black cricketers as well. The representation of black cricketers within professional cricket right now is worrying, from where it was. ECB needs to look at that and start doing something tangible to make the changes as opposed to some PR initiatives.

Q47 **Steve Brine:** I am going to come back to the personal finally because I was asking you about other county teams. You have become a rallying point for people to contact you, and you named a few counties from which people have contacted you. Have young people in other sports been in touch with you to say they recognise what you have said?



Azeem Rafiq: Not young people. I have had people from other industries in different lines of work. I got an email from someone who works for a big utility company, and the similarities were the same. It was all just the same. I have not had young people from other sports.

Steve Brine: What about other sportsmen and women playing elite sport?

Azeem Rafiq: No, I have not heard from other sports, but like I said, I do not know how big the story has been or if people are aware of it in other sports. I know when I was playing cricket I did not really know about anything else that was going on in the world.

Q48 **Steve Brine:** Finally on that—and you may not find this easy to answer but I will ask you anyway—you are obviously quite an emotional person and you have been through an emotional time. I do not blame you. It is emotional listening to your evidence this morning. I think my colleagues would all concur with that. You have spoken a number of times about it being your dream and your family’s dream for you to play this game. You grew up in Barnsley. What would you say to 10 and 11 year-old boys and girls in Barnsley today hearing this, reading, this, who might have that same dream and whose family might have that same dream for them? What would you say to them?

Azeem Rafiq: This is why where we have got to is quite difficult, because I cannot even imagine, as a parent, hearing me speaking out, why I would ever want my kids to go anywhere near the game. I do not want my son to go anywhere near cricket. This is where the ECB and the counties can show that they can use this as an opportunity for change. Get parents to understand, and show them that, “We have messed up, but we are going to do this, this, and this to make sure it does not happen to your kid.” As a parent, I would say keep an eye on my kids. Keep an eye on them, because this is reality. As a parent, I would not let my kid go there and just leave them in the hands of these people. I think it is pretty clear in professional sports, and other issues as well, people go from playing to coaching, they are handed responsibility for kids, and they just do not know how to behave in front of kids.

Q49 **Steve Brine:** You obviously had a love/hate relationship with the game. I was struck when you said, “Yorkshire is still my club”. It is still your game, is it not? In conclusion, by how many will we win the Ashes?

Azeem Rafiq: Five-nil.

Steve Brine: Excellent. I will leave it there, Chair. That is the answer we wanted. Thank you, Azeem.

Chair: I think hell will freeze over before we win five-nil.

Q50 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Thank you, Mr Rafiq, for your testimony today, which I know will help so many people, just by you speaking out. Thank you for that. You mentioned that we need to use this as an opportunity



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for real change. People have spoken out before, but nothing has changed. You mentioned tokenism. We had an urgent question in the House of Commons last week, and the Government's response was that Cindy Butts is being appointed to the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket. Do you have faith in this, or do you see it as more tokenism?

Azeem Rafiq: I spoke to Cindy a few months ago. I said to her, "Look, I will encourage everyone to come and tell you everything because you need to hear it. I want you to hear the experience, and then you will be judged on your actions". It is all well and good setting up a year-long equity commission. It sounds great. Cindy has been part of other things that are very reputable, but we have seen it all before. This investigation was apparently an international law firm. The panel had employment specialists, people of colour, and it was meant to be independent. It showed that these things are a little bit of a delay tactic.

To deal with the issue, I would tell the ECB, and I hope you guys are going to as well, that action is needed and it is needed now. To be honest, we are sick and tired of these equity commissions and these inquiries. We are sick and tired of it. All we are asking for is equality, to be treated fairly, regardless of the colour of our skin or the religion we follow, and respect as a human race.

Q51 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Absolutely. You want action from the ECB. What do you recommend so that we turn a corner and so that we can get more south Asian young people into the game, men and women, and they feel included and a part of the team, which is what you desperately wanted?

Azeem Rafiq: A whistleblower hotline, where people can come and speak. Listen to them; actually listen to them. And real accountability. It is important that, as much as it is about the institution, the way Yorkshire has handled this, there is accountability to the leaders. I think some have already faced it, but there are still some there. Everyone knows that if you do this, there will be repercussions. I would hold that right at the top of the list. We need automatic change.

Tokenism is something I want to avoid, and if that is the angle I see the ECB going down, I will call it out, because I think it has done that in the past. It put in a person of colour between eight people who are non-colour and says, "Look how great we are." That is not what we want. The problems are in the dressing rooms. Deal with that. Do not go to a PR initiative getting more kids playing. We do not have a problem there. There needs to be something set up to keep an eye on that throughout the country.

Q52 **Alex Davies-Jones:** You mentioned we need to change the dressing rooms; we need to change that culture of it being acceptable. We have heard from some female cricketers about some of the abuse and harassment they have faced and the misogyny that takes place in female cricket. Have you ever witnessed any behaviour or language in the changing room around misogyny or homophobia, and would you say that



cricket also has a problem in those areas?

Azeem Rafiq: I do not recall it like I do the experiences I have had, but it would be wrong of me to sit here and say it does not happen. Of course it does. As I said, the ECB needs to seriously look at things itself. There is no reason for it to have separate bodies where it palms off its responsibility and effectively asks them to clean the mess off its doorstep. The ECB needs to take responsibility for its own house. It is its game. It is the regulator. It is its funding. Cricket is different to football. Counties and clubs cannot function without the ECB. That is why it is important that ECB takes the lead on this. I think the action time is now. Enough. We are in 2021 now. We should not even be having this conversation.

Q53 **Giles Watling:** I would like to say, first of all, that you are an extremely powerful and lucid witness. Thank you for coming today. You said that you call for disciplinary action, yet only last month Yorkshire said that no one at the club would face disciplinary action. What is your reaction to that?

Azeem Rafiq: When I saw that post come up, I was staggered. At what point are these people going to read the room? At what point will these people realise what they are doing? Really, I was angry. It made me feel like they were saying, "Well, we have all this pressure, so we are apologising, but we do not give a damn what you say". In the middle of last year while the investigation was live and they were aware of the allegations against Gary, Gary was made captain again. He was given a three-year contract by these leaders, and they knew all this. Then I understand Roger had gone to members' forums and said to people that it did not involve anyone at the club. I think even as close as two weeks ago they genuinely felt they could hide this. I think that is what they have tried to do throughout.

Q54 **Giles Watling:** Have you seen a shifting of position?

Azeem Rafiq: I think they have been left with no option. I do not think they accept anything. I do not think Mark Arthur thinks he has done anything wrong. I do not think Martyn feels he is wrong in any way, or Andrew, or anyone else in that place. We talked about Michael earlier. He seems to have taken the same stance as the club—deny, deny, deny. Yes, I think they have been left with no choice. I want to thank the politicians for getting involved, and the media, the sports press, and the cricket media. There are some top people, and they have not let the calls die down.

Q55 **Giles Watling:** Earlier, as Steve Brine pointed out, you said, "my club." Clearly, you have some affection for the club, despite all you have been through. What would you say to the new chairman? What action would you like to see the new chairman take?

Azeem Rafiq: It is my club. I am a capped player at that club. It hurts me, where we have got to, to be honest. It should never have got here.



People I have been close to will back me up on this; I have tried endless times, to the detriment of myself, to stop this ending in what I see as a car crash. Kamlesh reached out straight away. We had a good five or six hours, and I challenged him on a lot of things. There were things that he said that I did not like, but I respected his honesty. I feel like he is going to do the right thing, but I have made it very clear to them that I do not see this as the end. I feel this is the start. I will be watching, and if he needs to be called out tomorrow or in five minutes' time, I will call it out. I do not want to live in a society—I do not want my kids to live in a society—that lets this happen any longer.

Q56 Giles Watling: If the club were to reach out to you and say, "Can you help us get back? Can you help us get our sponsorship back? Can you help us improve?" would you be prepared to do that?

Azeem Rafiq: If they got in touch and said, "Can you help us get our sponsorship back?" I would be very hesitant in that, because if that is the mindset, it is not genuine. Kamlesh has proposed a few things. As Steve said earlier, I feel like there are a lot of people who are prepared to work on the inside. I have been brave enough to call the institution out, and I would, in the short term especially, prefer to sit on the outside and keep holding them to account, so they know someone is watching. A lot of people have done that. I do not want to be the sort of person who talks about the issue, and then there are jobs and opportunities offered left, right and centre, and then I go and sit on the other side and tell everyone how great it is. I want to speak about the facts.

Q57 Giles Watling: You feel your position is that of the critic observing them?

Azeem Rafiq: And to help them push the right way. I want to help them push the right way, but I do not want the system to think it can induce me with any job offers. I do not care about my personal—that is pretty evident from the last 15 months. I could not give two jots what I do in my life. I have been brought up in a way where morals and values are a lot stronger to me. In five years' time, if no one wants to give me a job, that is fine. I do not care. But if in five years' time there are more kids playing the game and we have a game that is a lot nicer, I will be very proud of what I have done.

Q58 Giles Watling: Finally, do you think it is time the Government intervened in cricket? If so, what do you think the Government should do?

Azeem Rafiq: I think it showed the power in the last couple of weeks, with politicians and the Government intervening. I think it is important the Government watch over this, as close to it as I am, because I think it will make a big change in society. I really do. We all love cricket, those of us that do.

Giles Watling: I love it.



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Azeem Rafiq: All we want is the game I grew up watching, or what I thought the game was, to be a nice game for everyone, regardless of race, gender, or any other things.

Q59 **John Nicolson:** In a morning of very straight testimony, one story stood out for me. It is the story you told about being 15 years of age and an older man pouring red wine down your throat. First of all, was anybody else there? Secondly, did nobody intervene when that was happening to you?

Azeem Rafiq: We were in a car. I have a witness who was there and who has corroborated the events. Quite frankly, no, no one did. Looking back, to be honest, and talking about all these experiences, and the question about why go back and why not raise it earlier, I am angry at myself for looking the other way. Clearly, I was not strong enough.

Q60 **John Nicolson:** I think you are being too hard on yourself. You were only 15, and at 15 years of age all of us do things to try to fit in. It is human nature. The adults in the room, or in this case the adults in the car, should have intervened. There are lots of scoundrels in the stories that you have told us today. Are there any heroes? Can you think of people who have stood up for you?

Azeem Rafiq: Tino Best and Rana Naved. Tino especially has been involved in the media, coming out and publicly backing me. It could affect his future. Rana is a coach now.

Q61 **John Nicolson:** At the time when the bullying was happening, did people stand up for you?

Azeem Rafiq: No.

John Nicolson: Nobody?

Azeem Rafiq: Nobody.

Q62 **John Nicolson:** That is extraordinary. You are in the changing room, feeling isolated, subjected to bullying like this, having wine poured down your throat and all the other things you have told us, and you cannot remember a single person who stood up for you?

Azeem Rafiq: No. I think that is the institution. You had people who were openly racist, and then you had the bystanders, and a lot of people watched it happen. No one felt like it was important; it was such a normal thing that no one felt strong enough to stand up and say, "No. What are you doing? Stop."

Q63 **John Nicolson:** Do you think class was an issue as well as race?

Azeem Rafiq: To be honest, I am not sure on that.

Q64 **John Nicolson:** It is quite a posh game, isn't it? We know that you are more likely to play cricket if you go to public school. Scotland public schools are schools for the public, but in the English use of the word it is



a posh private school. You are more likely to end up as a cricketer if you go to one of those schools.

Azeem Rafiq: Again, I do not know the exact stats around it, but a gentleman has done a PhD around that—funded by the ECB, incidentally. His research has been ignored. In the last few years I think there has been a massive class divide. I do not know the exact term, so I do not want to quote the numbers, but you are a lot more likely to be a professional cricketer if you go to a private school, but you are even more likely to be a professional cricketer if you are white and you go to a private school.

Q65 **John Nicolson:** You quoted some figures earlier on that I thought were very striking. Among recreational cricketers 30% are English Asians, but in the professional game only 4% are English Asians. That is a shocking statistic because it shows that there are lots of people out there who wanted to play cricket professionally, but they just cannot get in to play cricket because of their colour.

Azeem Rafiq: As I said, the data and stats are pretty revealing. When you dive in more, it is even worse.

Q66 **John Nicolson:** Why do you think the representation of minorities has increased in football and decreased in cricket?

Azeem Rafiq: I am not fully in tune with football, but what I have seen over the last year and a half is some high-profile footballers showing the world how to behave, Marcus Rashford and Jordan Henderson. Clearly, there has been some sort of shift in football. A lot of people said to me at the start, "We would never have expected it from cricket." I think cricket has been allowed for a long time to be a boys' network. People who came in as a player in 1992 are still directing cricket at Yorkshire now. It shows how close that network is. No one has ever been a whistleblower. No one has ever had the courage to come forward because of the fear of not being believed.

Q67 **John Nicolson:** It is funny that you say it is a boys' network. People viewing this at home will not see the audience we have sitting here listening. I think there are probably about 30 people behind you, and there are two women among the 30. Not that we are in a very good position to talk as a Committee; none the less, it is quite striking that that is the audience that is drawn to this session to listen. Do you think you lost your career because of racism?

Azeem Rafiq: On the audience, the women are not here because the game does not invite women. It is so easy to say, "Yes, but they are not interested." Is the game doing enough? Are the leaders within the game doing enough? Do I believe I lost my career to racism? Yes, I do.

Q68 **John Nicolson:** That must be a terrible feeling.

Azeem Rafiq: It is horrible. Yes, it is horrible.



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John Nicolson: You are still a young man. To be looking, at your age, at a lost career must be very upsetting.

Azeem Rafiq: Yes. It is horrible, but maybe what was written for me was this. Maybe that is just what it was. I am a massive believer that everything happens for a reason, and like I said, hopefully in five years' time we will see a big change and I can look back at it and see that I did something far bigger than any runs I got or wickets I got. But yes, it is horrible. It really hurts.

Q69 **John Nicolson:** I hope you are right, and I hope that your testimony today will be part of delivering that change. Finally, you have mentioned your wife many times. In among all your travails, it seems clear you have a very strong partnership with her. That, of course, is the bedrock of lots of people's happy lives. I want to ask you how she has coped with this and how she is now coping with all that you as a family have had to endure.

Azeem Rafiq: She has struggled, and she still continues to. We have two young kids; one is just over two and one is about to turn one. Over the past 15 months they have not had a dad, really, because all I have been worrying about is Yorkshire going out to discredit me and how I am going to deal with it, dealing with lawyers, and dealing with the press. It has been challenging, but I hope today provides some sort of closure and I can treat her as she deserves.

Chair: Thank you, Azeem. It has been very interesting and very powerful today. That concludes our first panel. We are going to take a short adjournment of two minutes as we set up our second panel.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Roger Hutton and Lord Patel of Bradford.

Q70 **Chair:** This is the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee. This is our second panel into our inquiry into racism in Yorkshire cricket. We are joined here by the former chair, Roger Hutton, who has very bravely and kindly answered the call to come in. He wanted to come in. We note as a Committee that Mr Arthur and Mr Moxon were both invited, and they have both chosen not to attend, despite being there for longer and, by all accounts, having much more of an impact in terms of the mishandling of Mr Rafiq's case. First of all, you have been sat in the room throughout this, Mr Hutton. What do you make of what you have heard from Mr Rafiq?

Roger Hutton: Azeem was incredibly powerful. I thought he spoke brilliantly, and it makes you desperately sad for what he has gone through. I have apologised on a couple of occasions, but I repeat my profound apology for the experiences he has had with the club. He is



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being phenomenally brave. I thought he was very articulate today. I think he has done an outstanding job today.

Q71 **Chair:** What is your view of the fact that Mr Arthur and Mr Moxon have chosen not to attend, and what is your view of the way in which they have handled this inquiry?

Roger Hutton: I am deeply disappointed they are not here today. Essentially, Azeem's allegations, and there are a number, stem from 2007 to 2018. I volunteered to be chairman in April 2020, 18 months after he had left. I would have thought it would be right for the club to have representatives here today from people who were there while Azeem was employed and had a direct relationship with him. I have literally never met Azeem until this morning. I also would have thought it was good for the club to have someone who currently represents them here this morning.

Q72 **Chair:** Are they cowards?

Roger Hutton: The two executives found this whole process very difficult. They have failed, in my view, to accept the gravity of the situation. They have not wanted to apologise, and they have not wanted to take the recommendations of the panel going forward. Azeem made a very powerful point this morning about this being an opportunity for the club to change. At the very start, when the investigation took place, that is what I and the non-executives thought this would be. Sadly, it has turned out to be the reverse.

Q73 **Chair:** At what stage did you know that was going to happen—that the permanent directors on the board were going to effectively blockade any attempts to move the club forward?

Roger Hutton: There were a number of signals throughout this process. There was a moment when I was asked if we could abandon the investigation by one of the executives.

Q74 **Chair:** Who asked you to abandon the investigation, and when?

Roger Hutton: The CEO asked whether we could abandon the investigation. In June 2021 of this year there was an employment tribunal, and the non-executives and I were very anxious that, for good reason, the employment tribunal was settled, essentially because the club at a minimum knew that it had done some things that were wrong. At that stage the CEO made it clear that he would not and did not want to apologise to Azeem Rafiq.

Q75 **Chair:** It was personal?

Roger Hutton: I cannot say that. That is what he told me. At an early stage I suggested that, as in fact one of the Members did this morning, Azeem Rafiq may well be part of the process of healing and reconciliation and help with driving the positive agenda going forward. I was told that he would not be welcome.



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There were these isolated moments throughout the course of that investigation. The biggest issues came to light for me after the report was produced on 17 August of this year, and beyond, when there was a clear resistance to see Azeem as the victim, a clear resistance to apologise and, worryingly, a failure to look at the recommendations that the panel had put forward and start executing them so this would not happen again in the future.

Q76 **Chair:** 17 August, that is when you became aware that they wanted to sit on the report?

Roger Hutton: There was not one defining moment. You are on a board, and you are hoping to create change from within. But yes, I saw resistance, and the resistance accumulated.

Q77 **Chair:** Do you regret the fact that you did not resign earlier? You resigned once this came out. I know that you contacted the Committee to express the fact that you wanted to come here as chair and then resign, but circumstances did not allow that. You had seen Essex, for instance, where the "N" word was used by one of the board members, and that case has come forward. Then Mr Stephenson, the chair, said, "If this is not dealt with and apologised for, I resign", as simple as that. Why did you not take a similar action?

Roger Hutton: I believed that the club's culture was stuck in the past. I think the club's culture needs changing. I did not see that my resigning would be the way of changing that culture in August. I thought that my best way of changing it was trying to change it from within, until it became apparent that I was no longer able to do that.

Q78 **Chair:** Do you regret that choice now? Clearly, from an outsiders' view, you could have said in August, "I tell you, this is absolutely out of order. You dinosaurs are holding this process up, and frankly we need to put this out in the public domain. We need to apologise, we need to move forward, and we need to understand where the problem is." Do you regret the fact that you did not, at that point, make a stand in public?

Roger Hutton: I do not, actually. It would have been easier for me personally had I done so. I would not be being criticised for not having left earlier. But, no, I believe trying to continue to make the change has made this more of an issue.

Q79 **Chair:** Do you mean that screwing up to such an extent has made it such an issue?

Roger Hutton: No, not capitulating to those people who did not want change to happen and to use this as an opportunity to move forward.

Q80 **Chair:** You saw resigning at that point as capitulation rather than making a stand?

Roger Hutton: Yes.



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Q81 **Chair:** Okay. The previous chair, as I understand it, was making a bid to take back control from his position. What is your view of his part in all this?

Roger Hutton: Are you referring to Mr Graves?

Chair: Yes.

Roger Hutton: One of my difficulties as chair was I could not remove a director from the board without the consent of the Colin Graves Trust. I spoke to those trustees on personal occasions and at a couple of meetings, and it was made clear to me that they were supportive of the people in the club who I felt were partly to blame for the nature of—

Q82 **Chair:** Which people?

Roger Hutton: Some of the senior management.

Q83 **Chair:** Arthur and Moxon were supported by the Colin Graves Trust?

Roger Hutton: Yes, and some of the senior management, the head of HR.

Q84 **Chair:** You wanted to remove HR? Is that fair?

Roger Hutton: I believe that there are a number of people in the organisation who ultimately affect the culture negatively.

Q85 **Chair:** You are not quite clear enough there, I am afraid, Mr Hutton. Who precisely did you want to remove, and what did the Colin Graves Trust say to you?

Roger Hutton: I would have liked to have removed Mark Arthur and ultimately Martyn Moxon, not because of the conduct that is referred to in the report but as a consequence of their failure to understand the gravity of the situation, their failure to apologise, and particularly for their failure to move on the recommendations that the panel had put forward. For me, I would like to have removed those two people. I am not an executive chairman. I also thought that the head of HR should be removed.

Q86 **Chair:** They were individuals who sat on a bus hearing one of their players referred to as a "P" and they did nothing about it. Frankly, I would be staggered if that was a situation that came to light and I was chair. I would want to remove them for that reason as well as them not understanding the PR around this whole shambles.

Roger Hutton: I can only describe to you the reasons why I thought they should be removed from the club. Essentially, they did not realise the gravity of the situation, the changes that should be made, and that Azeem was a victim.

Q87 **Chair:** I am interested in the Colin Graves Trust. Basically, it is the money because Yorkshire does not have any money, and the Colin Graves Trust has the money because of the big loan that was put in



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place. They are the money people; what they say goes.

Is the Colin Graves Trust a pernicious element within Yorkshire? It has the keys to the castle; it has the money. Yorkshire cannot survive without the money from the Colin Graves Trust, yet here it is as a trust preventing you as a new chair moving out, frankly, Moxon and Arthur and the HR directors, who are people who are bang to rights as far as this goes.

Roger Hutton: The club owes a substantial amount to the Colin Graves Trust. I have not been involved in the history of the club. I imagine that without that investment the club would have been in terrible difficulties and historically would be indebted to the Colin Graves Trust. I do think on balance it is wrong that a major creditor of that level has the keys to decisions that a board should or should not make.

Q88 **Chair:** How does that change?

Roger Hutton: It is simply a negotiation between the club and the trust, or a refinancing of the debt.

Q89 **Chair:** Lord Patel, I can see you are in the audience today. Could you please step forward? Thank you. I felt like a game show host there, "Come on down, Lord Patel."

I am sorry to bring you forward on this. I know that you cannot talk about the ongoing investigation, we understand that as a Committee, but Mr Hutton has just made a really interesting point here that the Colin Graves Trust has, effectively, a veto-blocking on any moves that you do in terms of the board. How do you change that? How do you get this, quite frankly, failing outlook, if you like, of the Colin Graves Trust that has prevented Mr Hutton from dispensing with Mr Moxon and Mr Arthur? How do you get a grip on this?

Lord Patel of Bradford: I do not think for one second that I would be sat there, having gone through a proper process of any kind that is transparent and legal, for somebody to say to me, "You cannot do that," without giving me absolute concrete evidence on a legal basis or other why I cannot as chair. If that happened, I would not accept it and I would challenge it.

Q90 **Chair:** The only option is for you to resign? That is the only option?

Lord Patel of Bradford: No, it is not for me to resign. It is to fight back and say no.

Chair: I am not asking you to resign.

Lord Patel of Bradford: No, I know. It might be a blessing.

Q91 **Chair:** What I am saying to you is: is that the only nuclear option you would have? You have the Colin Graves Trust, which has a financial interest in Yorkshire and basically holds the board in the palm of its hand. That seems to be a desperately unhealthy relationship.



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Lord Patel of Bradford: I have only met one of the trustees on Zoom a couple of times. I found the person to be very receptive, reasonable and understanding. This is my experience of two Zoom meetings. My understanding is that she, along with her other trustee, would be held to account maybe to a child that has not even been born. The trustees say, "You made a decision in 2021 that affected my finances 50 years on" and she can be personally sued. I think they would be very careful about the decisions they make. My position is that if an individual is bringing the game or the club into disrepute and the evidence is there, they go.

Q92 **Chair:** Would you have sacked Moxon and Arthur, or would you have sacked the HR representatives?

Lord Patel of Bradford: If I was there at the time and if the evidence was such. It is difficult for me to look back in history, but it is not about Martyn or Mark, it is anybody who is bringing that club into disrepute in a way that has been clearly evident this morning. As chair you have a responsibility, and I would have taken that responsibility.

On my initial interactions with the person from the trust, they are completely independent. They were looking at their finances. They were looking at the way forward. They were making sure the finances are well guarded and looked after, and I think that is really important.

Q93 **Chair:** I will ask you to stay in place if that is okay. All Members do appreciate that you cannot talk about the current inquiry.

Before we move on to Damian, Roger, why is it that you did not sack any of the players who were involved in this racism?

Roger Hutton: The short answer is that I had no executive authority or responsibility in my role. If you are specifically talking about Gary Ballance, who is the person named in the report for using the "P" word, I was not involved in the investigation or the disciplinary piece. You will have seen the rather complex and convoluted description of the actions he took and the legal opinion in the report by the panel. I need to be clear that it was the panel that made that point, where it concluded that he had not racially harassed Azeem.

Q94 **Chair:** Yes. It basically suggested that calling someone a Zimbo is the same as calling someone a "P". That is ridiculous. Genuinely, words fail me on that. Why did words not fail you? Why did you not say, "This is an employee of ours. They have used the "P" word to another employee and they seem to have done it persistently. They need to go and they need to go now"?

Roger Hutton: As I say, I did not have an executive role in this. You have seen one set of advice and the club also took advice from a different set of lawyers who said that while there was a clear education and training need for Gary Ballance there was not a cause to bring disciplinary action against him.

Q95 **Chair:** Was education and training put in place, yes or no?



Roger Hutton: I don't know.

Q96 **Chair:** You were chair at the time?

Roger Hutton: Yes, I was, but there were a host of recommendations and I do not know the extent that it has or hasn't been put in place as yet. I don't know.

Q97 **Chair:** There is some sort of latitude to be had with the fact that you were put in place in April 2020, but if this comes across your desk as a player calling another player a "P", and the recommendation from the lawyers was for education and training, I do find it staggering that you did not follow through on that at least. Did you talk to Moxon and Arthur? Was it so toxic in the Yorkshire boardroom that this sort of thing was not discussed?

Roger Hutton: It was not so toxic; actually, it was hard to get them to do any of the things that you wanted to do. From 17 August right the way through until I resigned there were a series of board meetings where we repeatedly asked the executive to take steps. Hosts of emails and calls saying, "Please can you do the following things" and they were not done.

Q98 **Damian Green:** There is nobody from the executive either past or present here with us today, and what you are describing is that basically you held board meetings and they would just ignore you. Presumably, there were other, if you like, forces of light on the board. It makes me really worried about the future of Yorkshire Cricket Club. Is there anyone working there who is capable of grasping this nettle?

Roger Hutton: I have to say a couple of things. I only started my role in Covid times and I had been to the club only a limited number of times. When you see, by way of example, that letter signed by about 13 people saying what they said in that letter, I had not met most of those people. I literally would not be able to recognise most of those people. It is hard for me to evaluate the personalities of all the people there. I am thrilled that Lord Patel is there and he has already started doing a great job. There are a couple of non-executives who have remained. The non-executives were very supportive of my position at the time. They can definitely bring change.

I am hopeful that change will be brought, but I think there are two or three things still for the club to do, and they are really important. When I first started, I was concerned about the governance in the club. I created an independent investigation of the governance of the club; that was produced in June. There were some 40-odd recommendations that we needed to improve upon. I am not clear that has been done.

The culture is at the heart of the issue here for me. It is a culture that is stuck in the past, however you want to describe it. That is the most polite way you could describe it. That the CEO has resigned is fine but that is not going to change the culture of itself. There are an enormous number



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of positive recommendations made by that panel, but as at the date I resigned there was no strategy to develop them, and they also need to be developed.

I am very hopeful and optimistic about the club—because I love it, despite what we are talking about today—that those things will happen, but they do need to happen.

Q99 Damian Green: This is for Lord Patel. What we are hearing is that the chairman could be as well intentioned as possible but it is really difficult to implement the decisions that clearly need to be taken. I get the point that changing the culture is not just a question of replacing the CEO, there is a huge stable to be cleaned out there. As chairman do you feel that you have the power and authority to do that?

Lord Patel of Bradford: I have been here before in all the roles I have had, and I think it is how you implement it. It is very difficult if you cannot see people face to face—Roger was right, it was in the pandemic—so I have begun every day to see individuals. Yes, this is about culture, there is no question, and it is not just about Yorkshire, it is about other clubs, it is about cricket, and it is a culture change.

What I have seen is a combination of things. I am very early days into my tenure, but just in terms of feeling and talking to people, you see denial, absolutely. You see phenomenally hard-working people who have given their lives to the club. You see that people are terrified, scared; they are in the headlights, mentally completely stressed for themselves, their families, their children. You see a lot of sadness, and I think we are all going to have to go on a journey to change that.

I am going to have to be a very active chairman. I have to play a leadership role at the moment; we do not have leadership there. I am very lucky that somebody, Paul Hudson, stood up to help to keep things going. This is an organisation that has been hammered left, right and centre. It may be for the right reasons but there are individuals at the heart of it, and just like the hurt Azeem has gone through, there are some people going through hurt as well. However, changes are going to have to be made. It is not going to be overnight, but by golly we have to move on it really quickly and hard. I am prepared to take whatever decisions I need to take to move this forward because there are too many young people and staff who are suffering at the moment.

Q100 Damian Green: I find it deeply puzzling how anyone could be a cricket lover and a racist. You only have to love the game and look around the world and it is obvious skills are shared and distributed fairly, as it were, or possibly unfairly. One of the things we have heard this morning that I find most odd from the point of view of a sporting club, which in the end is measured by sporting success, was to say, “Pick a few of those Asian players but not too many of them”. Surely you pick your best players. First, is that a fair representation of what went on at Yorkshire in the past, and secondly, did you know about that when you became



chairman?

Roger Hutton: I am embarrassed I did not know that. I have never heard that. I was not there during any of that period. That is for those who were there at the time to answer. I just cannot assist with that. I personally have never seen or heard anyone say that in my short tenure.

Q101 **Damian Green:** The stats we have been quoting all morning, you look at it and you think you have all these Asian-heritage players in Yorkshire all very good up to the age of 16, but literally none of them in the Yorkshire team.

Roger Hutton: I totally agree. I am obviously a cricket lover. I am at heart a cricket fan. When you drive through the streets of Leeds and Bradford, what you see in the parks is mostly people from a south Asian background playing cricket. That they do not end up in the cricket club being stars for Yorkshire County Cricket Club is ridiculous.

Q102 **Damian Green:** I am fascinated. Around the boardroom has nobody ever said, "We could do better"?

Roger Hutton: Yes, absolutely. In the short time that I have been there, there is an equality, diversity and inclusion committee for this. There were a number of initiatives put forward to improve this, and the club recruited an equality, diversity and inclusion manager in March. There were positive steps being taken so everyone understood that this is what the club needed to change, and it needed to develop and improve its accessibility and its reach and that, most importantly, the south Asian community wanted to be at Yorkshire and felt at home at Yorkshire. Sadly, what we heard from Azeem today is that he does not want his children even to play cricket.

Damian Green: Yes, I agree, that is tragic.

Roger Hutton: That is the terrible punchline.

Q103 **Damian Green:** If that is reflected more widely, then that is tragic on all sorts of levels.

The final question is to Lord Patel. Is one of the bits of culture that you think you need to change that senior players, England players, the big names in the dressing room, must not be allowed to set the culture? We have heard this morning that that is one of the ways it can get toxic. Do you draw that lesson from what we have heard?

Lord Patel of Bradford: I think it needs to be that they are not just players, they are a key part of the solution. They need to be on that journey with us. They need to learn with us. As Azeem said, you get in there at 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, you grow up, you watch your heroes and you emulate what they are doing. I think they need to come around the table now. It is not just about the captain or the two senior players, it is about all the players having a say.



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In my world, in the health service, talking about service users and patients, do we really do it? Do we consult? Do we talk to them? Do we actually listen and work with them? I am a social worker so that is what I bring. I want to take those skills and say, "Be honest and truthful." On the question earlier about women, it is terrible. I have sat at cricket clubs all around the place. You would not let anybody talk about your mother or your sister like that, but it is acceptable, it has been done for years.

There is education under way in this process. I struggle with the idea that a two-day education course that you are forced to go on is going to change anything. I struggle with the idea—and I have been there and done it—of employing an equality manager because it is his or her issue or problem. It should not sit in HR; it should sit with the chair and the chief executive. If we do not lead it and believe in it, then you are on a hiding to nothing.

Q104 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Thank you to both our witnesses this afternoon. Roger, were you aware of issues with racism at the club before you took the post?

Roger Hutton: No, not at all. Well, I had read the press. I was not aware of specific allegations of racism, but I knew that the club had a history where the question kept being asked because I am a fan of the club. I was not blind to questions that had been raised in the press in the past.

Q105 **Alex Davies-Jones:** When you took the post, being aware of wider issues in the club, was it something that you made a priority to tackle?

Roger Hutton: To be candid with you, my first desire was to improve the culture of the club more broadly rather than being in relation to discrimination specifically.

Q106 **Alex Davies-Jones:** How did you go about that?

Roger Hutton: It is simply trying to engage with the senior executive and begin to understand them and how the club may change. I literally had probably only been involved in two or three Zoom meetings from my date of appointment to when the Azeem press statement was made. When that press statement was brought to my attention, which was late August, I spoke to one of the non-executives and we saw it as a brilliant opportunity.

Q107 **Alex Davies-Jones:** How far does sporting success drown out disquiet about individuals at Yorkshire Cricket Club?

Roger Hutton: Certainly in my tenure sadly, and in the last five or six years, Yorkshire has not had much sporting success, so I do not think it has drowned it out in reality. As I tried to answer a question earlier, the more south Asian players you can get into the side, the more talent you introduce and the more successful you are likely to be. The reality is that



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I do not think sporting success impacts the club's attitude to racism. If it did, it should only encourage it to be more engaging and accessible.

Q108 **Alex Davies-Jones:** We have heard about some of the ways in which disciplinary action was taken at the club, or not taken because of other issues. Do senior players or the star players get leeway or preferential treatment when it comes to any allegations made towards them or any issues in their behaviour? Are they treated differently?

Roger Hutton: I have not witnessed or seen that so I cannot help with that question, I'm sorry.

Q109 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Is it more difficult then to discipline senior players because of the high profile that they receive in the media and with fans?

Roger Hutton: In my experience at Yorkshire I wouldn't say so.

Q110 **Alex Davies-Jones:** If I bring you now to the report of the inquiry, which we have discussed already today, did the findings of the inquiry surprise you?

Roger Hutton: Yes.

Q111 **Alex Davies-Jones:** What was your first reaction on seeing that senior players were involved in this discriminatory behaviour?

Roger Hutton: I was shocked and surprised.

Q112 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Did you think that publishing just a summary of the report would satisfy those interested in what was happening at the club?

Roger Hutton: I recognised the limitations in only publishing the summary of that report.

Q113 **Alex Davies-Jones:** In recognising those limitations, with the hindsight you have now, what would you have done differently?

Roger Hutton: On the subject of publication, it is a very important question that you are right to bring. There are a number of complexities you will have seen on the report itself. There is a very strong warning about the confidentiality of that report. Without the participants, many of whom are employees of the club, agreeing to waive those rights you cannot publish. After the investigation was started, an employment tribunal was subsequently brought in December 2020, which also complicated the issue. Strong advice from the barristers at that stage was again that you could not publish that report. Sadly, under legal advice, we could not publish the contents of the report in the way that we might have liked.

Q114 **Alex Davies-Jones:** I would like to ask you now about some of the most harrowing testimony we heard this morning from Mr Rafiq around the way he was treated following the loss of his son. Are you aware of a bereavement leave policy or personal circumstances support at the club for players and staff?



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Roger Hutton: I believe there is a policy, yes.

Q115 **Alex Davies-Jones:** There is a policy in place, and you are aware of what that is?

Roger Hutton: Not in detail I'm not, no.

Q116 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Are players supported with mental health? We have heard some of the testimony around some of the Muslim players at the club and how they were treated when they were fasting. Is that taken into account, and does the club have a policy to support that?

Roger Hutton: There are mental health policies. I am aware of one player having had support over the period when I was chairman. I am not aware in more detail of anybody else other than the one player I know having had support.

Q117 **Alex Davies-Jones:** What was the feedback of that, if you have received any?

Roger Hutton: I have not received any.

Q118 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Lord Patel, this is probably a question for you now. Since Mr Rafiq has spoken out, a number of players have also come forward with their own experiences of racism at the club. Do you have plans to reach out to these players and speak to them about what they have experienced? What steps are in place at the club to support current and former players?

Lord Patel of Bradford: My initial process has been to set up a completely independent hotline, as we call it, a place where people can go with confidence that the issue will be looked at very carefully, triaged and then taken forward. I think that is really important. The whole process has encouraged people to come forward. I would rather that than to go to the media, where it is trial by media as opposed to a proper process in place.

I have reached out to lots of people who have sent me a message where I think it is appropriate for me as chair to talk to them. Now we have the hotline set up, literally within days, I think it is more appropriate that it goes through a process and it is seen to be going through a process. It is not Yorkshire dealing with it; it is independent. We take that challenge and then take it forward.

Q119 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Are you aware how many calls you have had to the hotline since it has been set up?

Lord Patel of Bradford: It has gone live today so I do not know. In three or four days we have talked to the senior barrister who is leading this. We have set up the structures for it. We have asked him to write the terms of reference; we are not dictating. I would imagine there are going to be a number of calls. Look, people may still feel, "Yorkshire set this up. I can't deal with this. I want to have a phone call, I want to have a



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discussion". We will do everything possible to enable those discussions to be had, even if it means me personally going out. I want to try to keep it independent. I have a role and I think that things have to be investigated properly.

Q120 **Clive Efford:** Can I ask you, Mr Hutton, were you surprised in any way by the way that the report into the inquiry was written?

Roger Hutton: I have no experience of receiving a report like this before. I did not know what I was likely to receive. I ultimately was surprised that there were differing views from the investigation team, the international law firm, and the conclusions of the panel, which to some extent was unhelpful.

Q121 **Clive Efford:** It was cast in terms that were so defamatory it could not be published. Was that helpful to Yorkshire County Cricket Club?

Roger Hutton: No, it was very unhelpful to Yorkshire County Cricket Club because the investigation team had, by and large, tried to write a report that anonymised the issues so far as they were able. The panel conclusions were much more explicit and, therefore, it made it more complicated to publish.

Q122 **Clive Efford:** In hindsight, do you think that if it had been possible to produce a report that could have been published it would have helped the situation and we would not be where we are now?

Roger Hutton: Yes, I definitely agree that it would have been more helpful. There are a number of problems with Yorkshire County Cricket Club handling this report and one of them is because it is essentially dealing with its own employees in the situation, so there is a general defamation point. There is a different point that a number of your employees have volunteered to participate in this investigation and have rights associated with that. Unless they waive their rights, then you are in a situation when as an employer it is much harder to publish.

Q123 **Clive Efford:** You mentioned employees being involved in the inquiry. Did it alarm you that so many people refused to give evidence to the inquiry?

Roger Hutton: Yes. I do not know how many did refuse because I have no visibility on the investigation process. I have not seen the evidence other than Azeem's statement, and I do not know exactly who didn't. I know that certain people clearly did not, but I don't know how many others did not come forward. People did come forward; Tino Best and many others did come forward. Yes, one of the difficulties with the club commissioning the report is that we cannot compel anyone to come forward because it is a voluntary process.

Q124 **Clive Efford:** Are you satisfied with the inquiry? Do you think it lifted up the rocks or just said, "There is a rock over there"?



Roger Hutton: Am I satisfied with it? I am glad we did it. I think it has shone the sunlight on Yorkshire County Cricket Club's culture. I do not agree with all of its findings and the process was to some extent flawed, but I am still glad that we carried out the investigation.

Q125 **Clive Efford:** What is your association before you became chair of Yorkshire Cricket Club? Were you a long-term fan?

Roger Hutton: A long-term fan, a fan from when I was seven years-old, yes. I was a long-term fan. I had not served on the board before, so I came straight in from not being a board member to being chair.

Q126 **Clive Efford:** What does the Fletcher report mean to you?

Roger Hutton: It doesn't.

Clive Efford: It doesn't?

Roger Hutton: No.

Q127 **Clive Efford:** It was a report to Yorkshire Cricket Club in 2014 into racism in the club, with quite significant findings. It was not a reference point for you when you became chair?

Roger Hutton: I wasn't aware of it.

Q128 **Clive Efford:** Can I ask you, Lord Patel? What do you know of the Fletcher report?

Lord Patel of Bradford: I know it is a fairly damning report and there are lots of issues in there that clearly have not been addressed over the years. I think we will be going back over lots of reports that present various bits of evidence.

My personal position is that we need to take stock, we need to listen, and we need to go on a journey. It is very difficult. How can I relate it? My wife was born under apartheid in South Africa. I have relatives there. My mum was born there. The day Mandela took over you could have had a bloodbath and people would have said that is justice. The fact that some people could sit round the table with somebody who had bullwhipped them the day before and work a way forward takes humanity to a different level. Could I do that? I don't know, but I know that I need to take people with me and people need to learn for themselves. It is pointless me going in there as chair saying, "If you don't do this and you believe this, then you are out the door," or people saying what we will do and they do not own it. Ownership is crucial and the journey is crucial.

As Azeem said in his own testament, I think half the time it was water off a duck's back because that was what happens every day. You and I and everybody here knows that happens every day in lots of environments and we as a society have put up with it for too long. It pains me that this is prevalent in cricket, it really does. Cricket gave me an escape in a life that was tough. I wish other children could have that opportunity as well.



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It is up to us, and I play my part in that, to look at all the history, look at all the reports, but now work out a very practical action-orientated way forward. That is going to be tough but, as Azeem has said, politicians are involved and you represent people. It is not about MPs, it is about your constituents who have said, "We are not having this." I think we have to follow suit to do that. Sorry, a longwinded answer to your question.

Q129 **Clive Efford:** No, thank you for your answer. Mr Hutton, just shortly after you became chair, the murder of George Floyd occurred and we had the Black Lives Matter movement. What was the response of Yorkshire Cricket Club to what was happening through sport in response to that?

Roger Hutton: There was no immediate response to that. The reality was that the players debated among themselves what stance they should take in relation to that and wore a logo, I believe, on their shirts at the time. The real response, I think, the opportunity, was when Azeem really only half a dozen weeks later than the George Floyd death made his statement. That was our opportunity to get to grips with the situation and develop change. That was the moment I saw the opportunity.

Q130 **Clive Efford:** There was a lot going on in sport in response to Black Lives Matter and it is not Black Lives Matter, the movement, it is the up-swell of public opinion and concern. Would you say that Yorkshire Cricket Club was an outlier and did not respond like other people, other organisations?

Roger Hutton: I would not say that publicly, no. I would not have that view of what they did in reality, no. I would not say that.

Q131 **Clive Efford:** What was done? You allowed the players to have a discussion but from board level down was there anything that was instigated?

Roger Hutton: There were three things going on. The players wore anti-discrimination logos. I cannot quite remember what the wording was; you may have it. We had an EDI committee trying to create and develop change. We knew how important engagement and diversity and equity was. We had an ongoing plan to develop that. In essence, that was our reaction to the tragedy that happened in the United States.

Q132 **Clive Efford:** My last question is: where do you think we would be now if this Committee had not intervened and insisted on hearing evidence and calling for the report to be handed over?

Roger Hutton: I am not very clear, actually. Lord Patel has made some great steps forward and I am thrilled at that. I do wonder whether, in fact, the input of this Committee has resulted in that being a situation—and this is no reflection on Lord Patel, who is doing a great job, but whether or not he would have had the support and the ability to deliver what he started to deliver without your involvement. I do worry if you had not got involved what would have happened.

Q133 **Kevin Brennan:** Could you, Mr Hutton, shed any light on a question I



asked Mr Rafiq earlier on? When the report was originally commissioned, its terms of reference were that those writing the report would do basically two things, the second of which would be to make a finding as to whether Yorkshire Cricket Club was institutionally racist. That was the original term of reference in September 2020, I believe, and then while you were chair of the club, in April, I believe, of this year, that was changed. They were no longer to report to the panel on the issue of whether or not Yorkshire Cricket Club was institutionally racist. Can you shed any light on that?

Roger Hutton: Yes, I hope I can. When the original scope was set out and agreed with those people representing Azeem Rafiq, there were two issues that the investigation team was going to look at and the panel was going to report on. They were the specific many allegations from Azeem and, secondly, the extent to which Yorkshire County Cricket Club was institutionally racist. The actual question posed never changed. Unbeknown to me, and I don't know when or how or at what stage, the panel asked the investigation team not to make findings on the second question because—

Kevin Brennan: I can tell you when it was. I am surprised you do not know. It was on 16 April 2021, as it says in the report.

Roger Hutton: Okay, thank you. Well, they did not do that with my knowledge and the panel, I can only assume because I had no input into the process at all—I stood completely back from the process—must have concluded that it wanted to make the finding on whether the club was institutionally racist or not rather than the investigation team.

Q134 **Kevin Brennan:** Could you speculate at all? Maybe it was appropriate, I do not know, that you were not informed or approached about this change. I would have thought it would have been appropriate, but can you speculate at all as to why the panel suddenly, seven or eight months into the inquiry, decides that the terms of reference that it had set asking for the people conducting the investigation to make a judgment on whether the club was institutionally racist is something it did not want them to make because it wanted to have control over whether that conclusion was drawn? Why would it have done that?

Roger Hutton: I have no answer. I am sorry, I do not know why it did that.

Q135 **Kevin Brennan:** Lord Patel, obviously you were not involved at this stage. Do you have any thoughts on that?

Lord Patel of Bradford: If I was chair of an organisation and I set the inquiry with clear terms of reference, which I would expect myself and the board to agree, if for some reason those terms of reference were changed halfway through I would want an immediate board meeting to discuss why those terms of reference had been changed.

Q136 **Kevin Brennan:** In the inquiry you set up, I think you have told the



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Committee that, in fact, the terms of reference would be set by the independent QC?

Lord Patel of Bradford: By the independent QC who was looking at this.

Kevin Brennan: Sorry, Mr Hutton?

Roger Hutton: That is what happened, so I took no part. I set off the investigation team and the independent panel to answer two questions. One is about the allegations of Azeem Rafiq and the second is about whether Yorkshire was institutionally racist, which is a massive question.

Q137 **Kevin Brennan:** But the panel at some point decided it did not want the investigating team to answer the second part?

Roger Hutton: It wanted to answer it itself, yes, it did.

Kevin Brennan: Yes.

Roger Hutton: But I did not know about that.

Q138 **Kevin Brennan:** You did not know that. Well, we all wonder why, don't we? Mr Hutton, is Yorkshire Cricket Club institutionally racist?

Roger Hutton: The report concluded there was insufficient evidence. The panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence. I have to observe that in the last few months there has been a substantial amount of thoughtlessness and ignorance, a reluctance to apologise, a reluctance to see Azeem as the victim, and a reluctance to put into place the recommendations, which I think are really important in this process.

Q139 **Kevin Brennan:** That sounds to me like you are edging towards the word "yes" in answer to my question. Would that be fair?

Roger Hutton: I think the question remains unanswered.

Q140 **Kevin Brennan:** My question is to you rather than what happened in the report; in your view? You were chair for 18 months and you have resigned.

Roger Hutton: Yes, I fear that it falls within that definition.

Q141 **Kevin Brennan:** Thank you. Lord Patel, how does it feel to be the chair of an organisation that is institutionally racist, according to its previous chair?

Lord Patel of Bradford: That is a very interesting question.

Kevin Brennan: That is why I asked it.

Lord Patel of Bradford: I suppose that almost suggests that organisations I have chaired in the past or that other people have chaired in the past are not institutionally racist and there is an issue. I have been appointed because there is a charge of institutional racism, and clearly the processes, the systems and the systemic nature of what has been



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going on, as we have witnessed in many organisations, feels to be there. My job is to work as hard as I can with people to change that process. I have to be proud of the organisation I am chairing, there is no question about that. I have to lead it into the right direction.

Q142 **Kevin Brennan:** Just to wrap this up a little bit, Mr Hutton, has the ECB, which is also going to give evidence, done enough to combat racism?

Roger Hutton: No. For me, at the outset when I spoke to the chair of the ECB on 4 September, I always felt that the ECB should be carrying out this investigation. I do not know whether you want me to talk about that in answer to this particular question, but I think that the ECB should have carried out this investigation. I think the investigation would have been far better had it done that, for some obvious reasons. I think it was right that it should have done it. This was a whistle-blowing claim against Yorkshire County Cricket Club, extending from 2007 to 2018, against the executive of the club, yet its response was to believe that Yorkshire should handle that when the claims were even against the executive in place at the time. For me, that seemed wrong.

It also seemed wrong to me because I believe and I said at the time of that conversation that I thought this was a game-wide issue. Yorkshire is a very prominent part of brand cricket and I felt that the ECB should have investigated at that time and I believe it could have investigated at that time. Had it done, the questions that Yorkshire is struggling to answer this morning about independence would not have existed. The questions that I am struggling to answer this morning about participation and getting people to participate would not have existed. I think publication would also have been easier if the ECB had done that. I think it should have recognised that this was an issue it should have got involved in.

I have heard that it has said that it is a regulatory body. Azeem did not actually approach Yorkshire in relation to this issue. He made some public statements in the press, probably because, to be fair—and you have heard him well this morning—he had no confidence in Yorkshire at that stage. He thought it was institutionally racist. In my view, the ECB did have the discretion to start investigating at that stage. I think its regulations do allow it to do that, and any member of the ECB could have started the complaint, as indeed it has just done with Essex at the moment. I think it could have investigated, I think it should have investigated, and I think the investigation would have been far more satisfactory.

Q143 **Kevin Brennan:** Okay, thanks. Finally, Lord Patel, you heard Mr Rafiq's evidence earlier on. Do you know what "white rose values" means and do you have white rose values?

Lord Patel of Bradford: I have been living in Yorkshire all my life. For me, I suppose white rose values are straightforwardness, bluntness sometimes, being honest, transparent, having pride in being a Yorkshireman, and working with people. The old joke, if you come to



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London and say hello to somebody it is an offence, sort of sums up that that is what you would expect.

Q144 **Kevin Brennan:** But racism should be no part of that as well?

Lord Patel of Bradford: Racism should not be a part of any values anywhere across the world.

Q145 **Steve Brine:** Hello, gentlemen. Thank you for your time. I do not want to detain you long. I just wanted to ask you a question, Mr Hutton. Premier League chairmen get together monthly, don't they? They have a monthly meeting. Presumably, county club chairmen do the same, is that right?

Roger Hutton: Exactly right, yes.

Q146 **Steve Brine:** Mr Rafiq earlier in answer to me named a few other counties, Leicestershire being named a couple of times in his interesting evidence. I just wonder whether you would care to comment on the wider county game, whether Yorkshire has just been unlucky in being at the centre of this storm and whether it could have been any one of the others. What are your thoughts on that, please?

Roger Hutton: I don't think if you have conducted acts of racism you are unlucky. I do not think Yorkshire—

Steve Brine: You are unlucky to get caught?

Roger Hutton: No, I think Azeem was very brave and it has shone some sunlight on a massively important subject. Yes, in answer to your question, it is quite clear from me speaking to other chairs generally that they believe this is a game-wide issue and they believe it is an issue that should be dealt with on a game-wide basis. I was invited to speak on the subject by Mr Watmore at one meeting of those chairs and I was quite vociferous in the fact that this is a game-wide issue and needs addressing by the ECB in one form or another.

Q147 **Steve Brine:** You see, you could say Yorkshire is unlucky in having Mr Rafiq speak out. I actually think that you are quite lucky because it has given you an opportunity as a club to wipe the slate clean.

Roger Hutton: Yes.

Q148 **Steve Brine:** We talked about it with him. The other clubs maybe have players who are at the earlier stage of this journey, still thinking it is just bullying, maybe it is just them. I just wonder whether you would care to name any other conversations that you have had with chairmen where they feel that this is coming down the track for them next.

Roger Hutton: I don't think it is right for me because I only have anecdotal conversation from them, but there are a series of chairmen who I think want to work more proactively to deal with the situation for the very reason that Lord Patel has said and I have said in this Committee here.



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Q149 **Steve Brine:** Finally, are there any others that are on the edge? You walked away because you were not happy, and I think I saw you on the news being followed by the vultures saying that you had resigned from the job you love. Are there any others who were on the brink, do you think?

Roger Hutton: I don't know that. I don't know that.

Chair: We have one final question from Giles Watling.

Q150 **Giles Watling:** Following on from Steve Brine, I am sure you will agree that what we have heard this morning is an absolute travesty—a young man who had his dreams shattered by institutional racism, bullying and abuse. Are senior figures at the club aware of the unique position that they are now in to, phoenix-like, do something about it? The point I am trying to make, and I think this really goes to you, Lord Patel, is that, given that this has happened, given that it has been brought into the open, wouldn't it be wonderful if this could be a defining moment and bring this racist, laddish, misogynistic behaviour finally to book, with the great club of Yorkshire leading the way?

Lord Patel of Bradford: I think you have articulated what I am thinking. People use this glibly, but this is a watershed moment. For me, the last two people I remember where I was involved in anything was Stephen Lawrence—he lost his life and that was a watershed moment in terms of changing something—and my direct involvement with David “Rocky” Bennett, who died in a prone position with six nurses sitting on him until he died, as a result of racism, and my subsequent involvement in developing a strategy to help that. They both died. This young man thankfully has not. Who could not be moved by what he said? Racist or non-racist, if you are human, who could not be moved by that? There is, as Mr Brine has said, a moment in time where we can rise from the ashes if we want to do it that way. We can have a blank slate—

Giles Watling: Absolutely, but what I am asking you, Lord Patel, is whether you have plans to make this happen.

Lord Patel of Bradford: I absolutely have plans. I want to make this the best county cricket club in the world, not just for cricket but for having the right culture and having the right values going forward. Absolutely, I would like to be the template that goes forward.

Chair: Thank you. That concludes our second panel. Lord Patel, Roger Hutton, thank you very much for your evidence today. We are going to take a very short adjournment, two minutes I promise, while we set up our final panel.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Tom Harrison, Kate Miller, Meena Botros and Alan Dickinson.



Q151 **Chair:** This is the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee with our third panel today on racism in Yorkshire. We are joined by Tom Harrison, chief executive of the ECB, and by three other representatives from the ECB, Kate Miller, Meena Botros and Alan Dickinson. Thank you very much for joining us today, Tom, Kate, Meena and Alan.

Tom, you heard what Mr Hutton said in terms of the ECB stepping away from this process. Why is it that you let Yorkshire deal with this? It was clearly either incompetent or, frankly, it did not want to deal with it in any sort of way. Why didn't you step up to the plate and deal with this?

Tom Harrison: Good afternoon, everyone. Can I just say first we have sat and listened to Azeem Rafiq's testimony this morning and I think we have all been pretty moved by it, to say the least. I think it has brought forward a lot of emotions and I am sure that the other panellists share that. I just want to commend Azeem's bravery. We have Alan here from the board, a representative of the board, who would also like to read a short statement if that is all right, Chair.

Chair: No, it is not all right, I'm afraid, Mr Harrison. We have limited time. Could you please answer the question?

Tom Harrison: Sure. The reason why we did not step into this investigation right at the start is because of the complex role that the ECB plays in relation to being national governing body. We have sent the panel a sheet explaining that role. We are the national governing body. We are the promoter. We are also the regulator, and on regulatory matters it is normal practice for first-class counties to take on investigations that they want to take on at their will. It is then for the regulator, in other words the ECB, to sit in judgment of that investigation and, if need be, run an additional investigation on top. On this occasion—and I will pass to Mr Botros, who is our head of legal and integrity and was intensely involved in the negotiations at the time—Yorkshire was very clear that it wanted to run this investigation itself. There was an offer put to the ECB about whether we wanted to—

Q152 **Chair:** Sorry, just to clarify that, who was it at Yorkshire who said to the ECB that they wanted to deal with this investigation themselves? Can you name the names, please?

Tom Harrison: Meena, could I pass to you?

Meena Botros: It was the chair of Yorkshire, Mr Hutton, who stated that he wanted the international law firm to carry out this investigation and the—

Q153 **Chair:** So he has just lied to us? He has just lied to us, is that right?

Meena Botros: The question that was put to the ECB was, "Would you want to put someone from the ECB on the panel that would come to the conclusions on the findings?" and the ECB said that, given it is a Yorkshire investigation, it would not be appropriate to have an ECB



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person on the panel coming to the findings because we have a role to play as a regulator and we will be carrying out our own investigation. If Yorkshire will be carrying out that investigation first, then that needs to conclude.

Q154 **Chair:** Sorry, I will just cut across you. He did ask you to put someone on the panel of the investigation, but when he said that they wanted you to investigate, was he truthful or was he untruthful?

Meena Botros: To my knowledge, Mr Hutton asked us to put someone on the panel in relation to the investigation that Yorkshire was carrying out.

Q155 **Chair:** Yes, but the question is very simple. When he stated to this Committee in the last session that he had asked you to take on the investigation—it is very different to whether or not you sit on a panel or not—what is the truth?

Tom Harrison: It may be that Mr Watmore had discussions as the chair at the time on that basis, but I can tell you that when it came to our regulatory department and in terms of the role that we were asked to play, it was very clearly do we or do we not want to partner on the investigation with Yorkshire County Cricket Club. At that point we took the very clear decision that we would not partner with Yorkshire. We would wait for it to carry out its investigation and then take steps post the investigation, as we have done now.

Q156 **Chair:** That was the interpretation. We had discussions over this matter ourselves offline, so to speak, and that was what I was told by your organisation. I am a little bit perplexed precisely where partnering actually means taking on the investigation. What I would like you to do, please, is to supply to this Committee all correspondence in relation to that decision as to whether or not it was Yorkshire that requested that it take the lead with this inquiry, that it was a Yorkshire inquiry, or whether or not actually it was requesting you to supply a panel member. Would you be able to do that?

Tom Harrison: Yes, of course.

Q157 **Chair:** Thank you. I have to say it is pretty extraordinary if that is the line that has been taken with us today and that is proven to have not been true in that respect. That is pretty extraordinary. Why is it different for Essex?

Tom Harrison: Again, I think we have all learned some very key lessons from this experience and, indeed, the mishandling of this investigation. Reforming our governance process and reforming our regulatory process is happening all the time. We are always trying to get better and we are always trying to be more thorough and better at how we do things.

Q158 **Chair:** What you are saying then, Mr Harrison, is effectively you decided that you would go by the rules when it comes to Yorkshire but with



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Essex, because of some bad publicity, you basically would not go by the rules, you would short-circuit that, despite the fact that we know from the Fletcher report that Yorkshire has a long history of not involving other communities and, frankly, racism?

Tom Harrison: No, I do not think that is a fair characterisation of the situation.

Chair: What is a fair characterisation? Why Essex and not Yorkshire?

Tom Harrison: Meena, would you like to just explain it from your perspective?

Meena Botros: Yes, thank you. In relation to Essex, we started our regulatory investigation at a time when Essex was not conducting an investigation, so there was no investigation to wait for. With Yorkshire, as we just set out, there was a desire from Yorkshire to carry out this investigation, led by the international law firm as you are aware. We were told that that would be—

Q159 **Chair:** Are Yorkshire a law unto themselves, effectively, in the regulatory system? It seems as if, frankly, it had a free pass on this until it screwed up, whereas Essex, because it has not launched an investigation because they were in communication with you throughout the entire processes, as I well know, then basically you come in and you circumnavigate it, you short-circuit it and you carry out your role as a regulator. It seems to me as if Yorkshire is almost too big to be pulled up about things like this. Is that fair?

Tom Harrison: No.

Meena Botros: In relation to Yorkshire, what happened was we were told that it wished to investigate this. It was going to commission an independent international law firm to carry this out and it would be completed within three months.

Chair: A law firm that Mr Hutton used to work for?

Meena Botros: Yes, and that the findings would be published and it committed to carrying out the recommendations from that. Based on those commitments from Yorkshire—

Chair: Neither of which it did.

Meena Botros: Correct, and the unacceptable way that it has been handled is a big problem here. In September 2020, when we were given those commitments, we therefore stated that we will not start our regulatory investigation until that period had concluded and it had come to its findings. However, we were clear that we would then be conducting our investigation regardless of that. With Essex, when I became aware of the allegations that had been made, we then immediately started our regulatory process. There was no correspondence with Essex other—



Q160 **Chair:** Will you do this every time in the future? It is just extraordinary that Yorkshire was allowed to effectively construct a report that was never meant for the light of day because it was so messed up, and I argue probably deliberately so, and that then effectively means that it almost could get away with, frankly, burying Mr Rafiq's quite telling, pertinent and quite obviously true evidence in many instances. Why is it that the game allows a club, no matter how big, to behave in that fashion? Your role as a regulator surely from this moment onwards should be to ensure that no club ever again performs in the way in which Yorkshire has performed over this.

Tom Harrison: I completely agree with that sentiment, Chair. I would add the following. The reason why Yorkshire was allowed to undergo this investigation is because up until that point it was fairly normal practice for first-class counties to run their own regulatory process and then for ECB as the regulator of the entire game to effectively sit in judgment of that investigation done internally. We have learnt lessons through this process.

That thing that is incredibly hurtful is not the fact that it has been handled so badly, but the fact that it has taken so long for the investigation to be published and sent to the ECB even. It took months for us to get copies of it. We have a litany of issues to deal with that will help our regulatory processes going forward.

Q161 **Damian Green:** I have one point about the overall process, and thank you for the helpful document. The ECB's basic role is to promote the game, including the county game. One of its other roles is to regulate the game. In a situation like this where you have an inquiry that basically is trying to hide, as it were, not to look under the stones enough, is there not an inherent conflict of interest in that? Shouldn't the regulatory function be in a different body than the promotional function? It is perfectly clear that in instances like this they conflict. It is more difficult to sell cricket now than it was a couple of months ago because of this.

Tom Harrison: You rightly point out that there is a complex role that they are playing, national governing body, the promoter as well as regulator. It brings some significant advantages to us as a sport as well to have everything under one roof, and that includes dealing with government and operating as a single sport singing with one voice. We do have processes that keep the independence of the regulatory operation in place. Meena, can you give a little bit more perspective on that and how it works?

Meena Botros: You are absolutely right that there is that conflict or at least potential conflict depending on the circumstances. The ECB recognises that and the ECB has put in place structures to deal with that issue. In relation to regulatory matters there is a regulatory committee, which is chaired by an independent chair and with independent individuals on there with relevant experience. They oversee regulatory process, including cases such as this, and the prosecution of cases so



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that there is that separation between the regulatory arm and the promoter, as you state. They hold the ECB to account in carrying out that role.

Damian Green: Sorry, who holds the ECB to account?

Meena Botros: The independent regulatory committee.

Q162 **Damian Green:** Who appoints the independent regulatory committee?

Meena Botros: The ECB. It is chaired by an independent individual and it has independents on there who make decisions in relation to cases.

Damian Green: I would make the fair observation that at the moment maybe Parliament is not the institution best equipped to advise people on how to regulate themselves. Nevertheless, I can only suggest that you have a look at that. An independent panel that you appoint that then holds you to account seems a bit circular, to put it as politically as I can. This might be a structural weakness in the process.

Q163 **Julie Elliott:** It sounds a bit like the wild west to me, to be honest. Do you think that it is appropriate that you appoint the committee that is supposed to be independent of you?

Meena Botros: We rely on the independence of those individuals to—

Julie Elliott: No, do you think it is appropriate?

Meena Botros: That is the structure we have in place in order for the—

Julie Elliott: Do you think that is an appropriate system?

Meena Botros: I believe that it works and that the ECB is carrying out that role as—

Q164 **Julie Elliott:** You have no idea whether it is appropriate. Do you think it is an appropriate system?

Tom Harrison: In the absence of a better system, it works. If you look at the personnel on our independent regulatory committee—

Q165 **Julie Elliott:** That is not the issue. To me it does not sound like an appropriate system. In fact, it sounds like an absolute system that is open to abuse. You cannot answer the question. It is appalling.

You said earlier that you knew that Mr Hutton used to work for this independent international law firm that was doing the inquiry into what was going on in Yorkshire. Did you know that before the investigation started or afterwards?

Meena Botros: We were informed in early September that Mr Hutton would be using that law firm. I was not aware of that before it came to light. I do not recall at which point exactly I was aware of that but it was Yorkshire that was going to be appointing that firm.

Q166 **Julie Elliott:** At the point that you became aware of it, did you at any



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point question that that might not be an appropriate company to do that?

Meena Botros: We were conscious of our role in that we were going to be carrying out a regulatory process in relation to this, both in terms of the allegations but also Yorkshire's handling of the matter. Therefore, it was not appropriate for us to have input into how it carried out that investigation. We did not want, therefore, to tell them who to have on their panels, for example.

Q167 **Julie Elliott:** It is not about telling them who to have on their panel, it is about saying to them, as a critical friend, I would suggest, that it would not look right having a company that Mr Hutton used to work for running this inquiry. At no point did you think that was a sensible thing to put forward?

Meena Botros: I agree with the point that you are making. It is not, as you put it, a good look. However, we have to be conscious that we cannot take small steps in intervening in that process because we have to respect—

Q168 **Julie Elliott:** It would not be intervening, would it? It would be simply saying, "This would not look good." Mr Harrison, did you not think of suggesting that?

Tom Harrison: As I said, the ECB has to be independent of the—if we are going to be overlooking and sitting in judgment of a process and we are prepared to make an intervention into one part of the process but not another, I do not think that is an independent regulator.

Q169 **Julie Elliott:** It is not really an intervention, it is a passing comment to say to somebody, "Have you thought about how this looks?" That is not intervening.

Tom Harrison: I cannot confirm that there were not offline comments made to that. I certainly did not raise it. As chief executive I did not raise it. The regulatory function needs to sit outside the operational function, for obvious reasons. Some of those have been raised already. We need to make sure that when we are able to sit in judgment of an investigation, it is having been independent all the way through the process.

Q170 **Julie Elliott:** One of you said—I think it was you, Mr Harrison—that it was normal practice that clubs carry out their own investigations, yet it was not normal practice for Essex to carry out its own investigation.

Tom Harrison: Meena, do you want to explain that?

Meena Botros: My understanding is that Essex will be carrying out an investigation. My point was that at the time we started our regulatory investigation—prior to it coming into the public domain last week and prior to the resignation that was covered last week in the media—there was not an Essex investigation. The standard practice is that if there is one, we will wait for that to conclude. If there is not one, we will commence straight away.



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Q171 **Julie Elliott:** At the very least as an outsider, and I am not a cricket person, looking at this it is very cloudy. You could describe this as the wild west, what we have heard this morning. Do you think the ECB is fit for purpose?

Tom Harrison: Yes, I do. We are learning a lesson here about—

Q172 **Julie Elliott:** What lesson are you learning, Mr Harrison?

Tom Harrison: I think we have a long way to go to fulfil our ambition to make cricket a game for everyone. That is something that ever since I have done this job I have tried to ensure, that the game is providing opportunities to more people from more different backgrounds to come and take part in this game.

Q173 **Julie Elliott:** You get funding from the EHRC to address equalities issues. How are you using that money? What are you doing to address those issues?

Tom Harrison: Kate, can I pass to you to take on some of this?

Kate Miller: Yes, we receive funding from many bodies, Sport England being one of them as well, to drive diversity initiatives across the game. There is quite a lot that we have initiated. The ICEC, the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket, was conceived in November 2020 and launched in March 2021. Its remit is to explore issues around race, gender and class within cricket at the moment. Cindy Butts, who I am sure is known to many of the Committee, is the chair of the ICEC. That is one of the initiatives. The anti-discrimination code, which we launched at the beginning of this season, has rolled out across the game and it means that everyone who sits within the ECB's jurisdiction is now holding to new standards around anti-discrimination. We had elements—

Q174 **Julie Elliott:** How are you holding people to account on that, as to whether people are actually doing this?

Kate Miller: Alan, could you pick up on some of the ways that we hold our stakeholders to account? There are many ways. There is our regulatory process—

Chair: Excuse me, you are not here in order to pass questions around to one another. You answer the question or the chief executive answers the question. If you are not capable of answering that question, the chief executive can answer.

Kate Miller: Stakeholders are held to account either through our regulatory process, and that can include fines, bans if you are players, or those involved—

Q175 **Julie Elliott:** Have you done any of those things?

Tom Harrison: Yes, we have. Very recently we have taken the step. As soon as we were aware of the decision and we had been informed of the decision about Yorkshire in late October, we had an instantaneous board



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meeting to decide what sanctions we would bring to bear against Yorkshire, having apologised to Azeem for the extensive racist behaviour he had been subjected to while a player at Yorkshire. The subsequent decision not to discipline internally led to us taking immediate steps to sanction the Yorkshire County Cricket Club with the full weight of what we have at our disposal.

First, we provide funding to all first-class counties but we also provide matches. Test match and international match allocations is one of the major revenue streams for first-class counties. We have immediately taken steps to suspend Yorkshire from being a host of international cricket.

Q176 **Julie Elliott:** But that has not come about through your processes, has it? That has not come to light through the processes that you have instigated.

Tom Harrison: Those are processes—we have lots of processes. There is a major match allocation process.

Julie Elliott: No, what Ms Miller was talking about, engagement with stakeholders and the other things she mentioned, what has come to light has not come through anything you were doing. I accept you have taken as action as a result of what has come out through other things.

Tom Harrison: We have taken action before that as well.

Julie Elliott: That is what we would be interested to know.

Tom Harrison: We were talking earlier about the impact of the Black Lives Matter movement across cricket. As a result of that we did our own exercise within the ECB, which I did personally, to hear the experiences of predominantly black British cricketers over the course of their cricket careers, dating back sometimes to the 1990s. That led to the instigation in November 2020 of the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket. That subsequently launched in March this year. We have talked a little bit about that.

We do have the independent board, which has been in place since 2018. It is a fully independent board overseeing all of cricket in this country. That is going some way beyond the Sport England governance code. We have revised and revamped our anti-discrimination code, which now covers all players and administrators through the game of cricket in this country. We have diversity standards being applied through the game. We have an all-game meeting later this week where we will be launching—

Q177 **Julie Elliott:** You have listed a whole lot of things there but I come back to how you know that these things are being adhered to. That seems to be where the breakdown here is, from what you are doing as an organisation.



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Tom Harrison: I do feel that the ECB has been aware of the importance of this agenda, not just racism. The whole point of discrimination, equity, diversity and inclusion, if you look at our strategy document “Inspiring Generations”, it has EDI at its heart, understanding and acting against discrimination at its heart.

What we have struggled with is getting our first-class game to wake up to the same extent. We are at that stage now where we are if not already in an emergency, we are approaching one. To reflect some of the interesting comments that Azeem has made this morning, it is very refreshing that even having been through the experiences he has been through, he is willing to help us, to work with us, to be a leader, to help us ensure that these reforms are taken through the game quickly and that it is action not words that follow.

Chair: Briefly, Mr Dickinson.

Alan Dickinson: Thank you very much, Chair. You asked whether ECB was fit for purpose, and I would strongly assert that it is. Can I comment on some of the issues you have raised, please?

We have had a long-standing desire, which started very much from when Tom joined the ECB as chief executive, that we wanted to make the game a game for everyone. There is a lot of work involved and a lot of initiatives have been taken. Part of the process that we have today is to set up what are called county partnership agreements with each of the first-class counties, by which we regularly assess, sitting down with them, whether they are making the appropriate strides towards good governance and good standards around their counties. Those are things where we can check on a regular basis how people are doing.

I can only apologise to Azeem Rafiq and his family for the horrendous time he has gone through, not just when it happened but subsequently, but I want to leave you in no doubt that the game is absolutely filled with the determination to resolve the issue of race in cricket.

Q178 **Chair:** It is all very good apologising to Mr Rafiq, and we have had a lot of apologies to him. What about the thousands of Asian kids who enter the game and are then chucked out the other side and do not make it, or disproportionately? It is all very good talking about initiatives and EDIs and bandying words around, but the point of the matter is that 85% of kids at Bradford Park nets are of south Asian background, yet we have four British-born Asians representing Yorkshire in the last decade. What on earth is going on? You cannot just say, “The game is doing this, the game is doing that,” because clearly you are failing.

Tom Harrison: I think we have to do better but I do not believe that the evidence is all bad in that space.

Chair: The evidence has got worse in participation.



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Tom Harrison: Okay. I accept there is an awful lot more work to do here. I also believe that we have signs in different parts of the country where there are really good elements of best practice happening, and it is not fair to say that that is symptomatic of the entire country.

Q179 **Chair:** Just in the biggest county with the most number of championships, with the most England players, just the biggest mass participation sporting club, I believe, in the UK. It is just that one that is the one with the problem?

Tom Harrison: No, I am not saying that and I am not refuting any of the evidence. I am suggesting that there is a lot more work to do and that the policies that we have put in place, be that putting in place 1,200 female south Asian activators to help get young females to play cricket in parts of the country where we previously have not, urban cricket centres that we are opening up around the country in parts of the environment where we—

Chair: Thank you. We are going to move on to Clive Efford and Kevin Brennan.

Q180 **Clive Efford:** Thank you for coming to give your evidence. You sent round a note to us saying, “combatting racism and making cricket inclusive and accessible”, which is very helpful. You have set up an independent commission under Cindy Butts. That is the first point you make. What are you hoping to learn that we do not already know from that commission?

Alan Dickinson: We obviously want to know what is going on around the country and we want evidence.

Q181 **Clive Efford:** Why do you not know? For goodness’ sake, come on.

Alan Dickinson: We will not know everything. We will not know the people who, like Azeem, perhaps felt unable to disclose what has been happening to them. The commissioner has called for evidence and it is called now and I am looking forward to seeing what the output of that commission is. You cannot simply say, “We know what the answer is and we will deal with it.” That is part of it, but we must get evidence from around the country. We need to set up the whistleblowing lines that Lord Patel has set up and get all the feedback we possibly can so that we know that we understand the full extent of the problem.

Kate Miller: To follow up on that, we know there is mistrust of administrations in organisations like ours. Tom did a lot of listening work after the Black Lives Matter movement and George Floyd’s murder, and we know that people do struggle to come forward. What we did not do was try to set up an independent body that could hold us to account, report back to us and share independent findings that we can then share with the game. It is clear that we have not gone far or fast enough. We do want to learn and listen to other people. To Azeem’s earlier point, he requested that we listen; he requested that we did a good, strong



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listening exercise, and I am pleased that the ICEC is there and that it can support us in doing that work. I think there is more for us to learn.

Q182 **Clive Efford:** Okay, so your second point in the note that you sent to us is that you have introduced a game-wide anti-discrimination code. When did you introduce that code?

Kate Miller: That was initiated at the start of this season. We already had some anti-discrimination references within our code and that hardened it and allowed all those that sit within our jurisdiction to fall under that rule. It allowed us effectively to have more powers and to be able to hold people to account and prosecute.

Q183 **Clive Efford:** What inspired you at that moment in time that you needed a new anti-discrimination code? Presumably, you had one before that, because you would be failing in your duties if you did not have one. Why did you need to revise it?

Kate Miller: There were elements of anti-discrimination. There was not a hard, explicit anti-discrimination code. Previously, you would be charged with bringing the game into disrepute. From what we had heard it felt necessary for us to be extremely explicit and initiate a fuller, harder anti-discrimination code.

Q184 **Clive Efford:** The Fletcher report that I referred to earlier on, which I interpret as an expose of racism in Yorkshire cricket but others may take a different view, clearly exposed the lack of opportunity for south Asian cricketers in Yorkshire cricket. What did the ECB do about that?

Kate Miller: There has been a huge amount that we have done broadly. We began to create our strategy Inspiring Generations in 2014. That addresses many inclusion initiatives across the game, from all underrepresented groups, not specifically just British south Asian audiences. We have a dedicated south Asian action plan that we are delivering against, and we are seeing positive numbers. I agree with your thoughts around representation in England teams, but we have seen an increase of 7% to 28% of ethnicity in our boys' pathway, so they are starting to work. We are starting to see data improvements there.

Q185 **Clive Efford:** Do statistics not show that you are more likely to represent England if you come from a public school than if you are from an ethnic minority background?

Kate Miller: I think the data say that you are more likely to represent England if you go to a public school in any sport, but I agree that it is an issue in cricket.

Q186 **Clive Efford:** I do not think that would hold up in football, but never mind. If I went to look at the data, and the Fletcher report was 2014, a quite detailed report—the previous chair was not aware of the Fletcher report, which was surprising—if I was to look at the statistics from 2014 to now, what difference would I find?



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Kate Miller: You would see huge work across our coaching base and improvement of underrepresented groups there.

Q187 **Clive Efford:** Yes, you have said that, but where is the representation at senior level? This is why we are here, because we are getting lots of participation. Azeem said it himself. We are getting lots of participation at grass roots level and lots of young people are playing cricket from the south Asian community. The issue we are confronting is that they are not getting through to the elite at the higher levels of cricket in Yorkshire, as we are looking at it today. From what we have heard, if we looked anywhere across the cricketing hierarchy we would see the same in other counties. Why have we not seen that change?

Tom Harrison: I think we are drilling into some of the real issues that have been brought around through Azeem's testimony and the work that has been done through the report and, indeed, will follow through from the ECB investigation that is happening now. Ultimately, we need to start to look at dressing room culture through the country and the culture around the professional game specifically and how we are looking at our pathways. As we said, we do have some positive evidence around some of the boys' pathway data that is following the imposition of both male and female talent managers at ECB, which we did not previously have and now do.

As I said, there is a huge focus on this, Mr Efford, from the ECB. It does take time to trickle through the network and I believe this is where we need help, to enable our network to reflect the accountability the ECB has and feels in this space with the control to impose it.

Q188 **Clive Efford:** My last question, because others want to come in, is about this term "Kevin", the racist use of the name Kevin. It has been alleged that that is widespread, not just used in Yorkshire but has been in common use at the elite level. Has the ECB been made aware of the use of "Kevin" as a racist term at senior level or any other racist incidents that have been reported to it that have not been acted on?

Tom Harrison: The first time I became aware of the slur was in reading the report. It will now form part of the ECB investigation and, of course, it will be dealt with in the same way that all allegations are being dealt with, through that investigation. I had not heard of that statement before I read the report.

Q189 **Chair:** What will you do if you find that England players are using this phrase? You are the chief executive.

Tom Harrison: This is really important, that we have a regulatory process that has with it a report that will go to the Cricket Discipline Commission.

Chair: You were fairly quick to ban Ollie Robinson.

Tom Harrison: We were, and that is because we had to—



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Q190 **Chair:** Someone, for example, using this particular phraseology because they do not wish to pronounce the proper names of individuals, and who then, for example, jokingly has a black dog that they name after this, what should happen to them? Are they someone you want in the England team?

Tom Harrison: No, of course not, Mr Knight, and I would say this. The difference between the allegation that you are alleging and the Ollie Robinson situation is that one of them was wearing an England shirt at the time.

Chair: Yes, and he was also 14 or 15 years old when he made the particular comments and this person is not.

Tom Harrison: He was 18.

Q191 **Kevin Brennan:** On the Cindy Butts Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket, will ECB commit to introduce its findings when it reports?

Kate Miller: In our action plan we have committed to listening, understanding and implementing recommendations that are made within the report.

Q192 **Kevin Brennan:** You are committed to implementing the recommendations that come out of that report?

Kate Miller: Yes.

Q193 **Kevin Brennan:** Thank you. I asked Mr Hutton earlier on if the ECB had done enough to combat racism and he said no, and then he went on to talk about the fact that he wished the ECB had conducted the report into the Yorkshire Cricket Club. Was he wrong to say you have not done enough on racism?

Tom Harrison: Until you have eradicated racism from the sport I do not think anyone can say you have done enough. It is a scourge on sport, let alone cricket. It is a scourge on society and we are taking the steps that we have set out today, whether that is around governance reform, whether it is about introducing the ICEC, whether it is about launching the anti-discrimination code, whether it is sanctions against Yorkshire, or whether it is about launching the EDI programme—

Kevin Brennan: The answer is you can never do enough to combat racism?

Tom Harrison: Yes, I think that is my answer.

Q194 **Kevin Brennan:** Can I go back to the report itself and the process that was conducted at Yorkshire Cricket Club and the ECB's involvement in that? Were you aware of what was going on around the way that the terms of reference of that report was changed halfway through so that the panel was going to take it on itself to report on institutional racism and not allow those investigators to make a determination on that? Were



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you aware?

Tom Harrison: I was not aware, no.

Q195 **Kevin Brennan:** Would it be fair to say that effectively what you did here was you sanctioned a process by which Yorkshire Cricket Club was going to produce a report that you were then going to overlook as a regulator? That is really what—

Tom Harrison: Not overlook. Take judgment on.

Kevin Brennan: Take judgment on as a regulator, yet this was a process where Yorkshire Cricket Club was able to and did, in fact, for a long period of time, possibly until this Committee intervened, withhold that report from your sight. How do you sanction a process where someone is going to produce a report that you are then going to pass judgment on, when it is a process that allows them to withhold the report from your sight?

Alan Dickinson: As I think we have said before, we have learned lessons from this. I do not think there is anything wrong in allowing Yorkshire to do its report. It was not right for us to intervene in order that we would regulate—

Q196 **Kevin Brennan:** But, Mr Dickinson, you did not say to them at the time, “If you are going to do the report you must show it to us so that we can do our job as a regulator.”

Alan Dickinson: We expected the report to be completed within three months and we expected to have sight of it thereafter. Clearly, today our process would not be to just let them do a report. We would do a report ourselves, an investigation ourselves, as well.

Kevin Brennan: You were sold a pup, basically, weren't you?

Tom Harrison: We trusted Yorkshire, and we were let down.

Q197 **Kevin Brennan:** Right. The Yorkshire Cricket Club which not only have we found out today from its former chair is institutionally racist, but is also an untrustworthy organisation whose word cannot be trusted. Is that what you are telling us?

Tom Harrison: I think the handling of the report indicates there are certain issues around institutional racism at Yorkshire, the handling of the report. I would agree with that.

Chair: The content, surely?

Tom Harrison: The content talks to culture and the culture of the game, which needs to be thoroughly dealt with across more dressing rooms than just the Yorkshire County Cricket Club, as we have heard through testimony this afternoon.

Q198 **Kevin Brennan:** Just to be clear, when Mr Hutton earlier on assented to



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the proposition that Yorkshire is an institutionally racist organisation, are you agreeing or not agreeing with that?

Tom Harrison: I am saying that the handling of the—

Kevin Brennan: I heard you say that just now, but I am asking whether you agree with what Mr Hutton said. I asked him if Yorkshire County Cricket Club was institutionally racist and he ultimately said yes. Do you agree with that?

Tom Harrison: I agree that the handling of the report indicates issues around institutional racism. That is as far as I am prepared to go.

Q199 **Kevin Brennan:** You are obviously not going to answer my question as to whether you agree with what Mr Hutton said. You either agree with him or you do not. I understand what you said about the culture of it. You do not agree with him, do you? That is what you are saying.

Tom Harrison: As I said, I think the handling of the report speaks to institutional racism.

Q200 **Kevin Brennan:** I think any reasonable person would determine from our exchange that you do not fully agree with Mr Hutton. Would I be wrong to draw that conclusion?

Tom Harrison: I think I have made my position.

Q201 **Kevin Brennan:** Finally, Chair, because I do not want to go on for ever, Essex has started an investigation now into the accusations. Is that correct?

Tom Harrison: Yes.

Q202 **Kevin Brennan:** Do you abandon yours now or suspend yours in the meantime while they do theirs, and do you have a commitment from them that they will show it to you when they have finished their report?

Meena Botros: We will not abandon ours. We welcome them also taking responsibility for looking into the matter, because they have responsibilities as an employer.

Q203 **Kevin Brennan:** So there will be two competing reports produced?

Meena Botros: Not competing. They are looking into it as an employer. It is a different role that they play, but we will carry out our role as regulator regardless of their investigation as an employer.

Q204 **Kevin Brennan:** I see. There is an obvious question: what if their conclusions disagree with your conclusions?

Meena Botros: We will have two roles to play. There will be two things that we will be looking into: the allegations that have been made, and we will come to a judgment on that, but we also will look at the way that they handle matters. If they mishandle matters, that will be subject to a separate disciplinary process. If they come to a different conclusion in a



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way that shows mishandling—so it is less about the conclusion and more about the way they handle the matter. If they mishandle this matter, they will also be subject to a regulatory process, not just in relation to the allegations but the way they dealt with them.

Kevin Brennan: Okay. We can unpack that later. I think the Chair has to pull stumps.

Chair: No, we have Alex Davies-Jones coming in as last man.

Q205 **Alex Davies-Jones:** I will be brief because I know we are short on time. Mr Harrison, do you see this as a watershed moment for the sport?

Tom Harrison: Absolutely I do.

Q206 **Alex Davies-Jones:** How do we make real change here and stop these initiatives that Mr Rafiq mentioned—the South Asian Action Plan, the “Inspiring Generations” report, the plans to tackle misogyny, homophobia, racism—being tokenistic?

Tom Harrison: I think it comes down to results and accountability. Azeem also spoke of that. I think the ECB would welcome the accountability to achieve the results that this Committee and others expect. We want to lead this. There are times when we need to, through consultation and debate, consult with our game and then come back with answers, and there are times when, frankly, the ECB needs to lead and be able to have a degree of control. That will not be a popular comment in the first-class network, but I believe in this case it is absolutely fundamental to our ability to remain relevant as a sport to our changing environment and to send a clear message. First, is cricket a game for everyone? Are we serious when we make strategic comments that we fully believe in about driving policy towards accessibility, towards openness and transparency? All the work that we have done through Inspiring Generations, although it has been maligned at certain points, it is an excellent strategic visionary document that sets out what cricket should look like for communities in this country.

Q207 **Alex Davies-Jones:** But it has not worked, has it?

Tom Harrison: We are in year two of five, and all I would say is that it is the right plan. Again, I have heard the hope come through this Committee today. I have heard it in every witness statement that we have heard this afternoon. I have heard an element of hope that we can use this to bring in community leaders to help us to bring in people from different communities who have felt maligned, who have felt they cannot speak, who have felt there is a lack of trust with the cricket authorities in this country. I know we keep going back to it but the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket gives people an external venting opportunity. I think all of the measures that we have talked about today and the hotlines that are going to be set up across the country are all opportunities for us to bring the game together and move forward.



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Q208 **Alex Davies-Jones:** You mentioned the hotlines, and in your own words you have anticipated an explosion of complaints following Mr Rafiq's whistleblowing. Are you resourced enough? What resource and funding are you giving to this to make sure that you can cope with the explosion of complaints and how are these going to be dealt with?

Tom Harrison: I think you can take it from me that this will be a properly resourced and properly funded element of our business.

Alan Dickinson: Whatever it takes. What we heard this morning from Azeem Rafiq was that he wants this game to get better on the issue of racism. Rest assured ECB absolutely shares that. We have a meeting on Friday with the whole game and I am personally very sure that the whole game will want to come together to see action to get to where we need to be.

Q209 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Finally, because I know we are short on time, watching this today has been incredibly harrowing being in the room. I know there are thousands of people across the UK who have been watching this who love the game and want to support the game but who are extremely disappointed by cricket and the game as it currently is. What do you say to that? What do you say to people whose impression of cricket now is on the floor?

Tom Harrison: I say please understand that we are sorry for the experiences that you may have been through, through trying to engage in cricket in this country. We know we have let you down and we are going to fix this and we are going to fix it quickly because the survival of our sport depends on it. It is absolutely at the core of the ECB and we will work tirelessly to ensure that very quickly that message is received throughout our network. We will transform this game very quickly.

Q210 **Clive Efford:** Sorry, I wanted to come in because it was something I was going to ask earlier but I thought we were running out of time. It is on the sanction that you have taken out against Yorkshire Cricket Club and taken away the test match. I wonder what sanctions you have open to you now in the light of your investigations now that you have done that. Is it the intention of the ECB to use major cricketing events as leverage to make sure that county cricket clubs adhere to your anti-discrimination code and adopt whatever recommendations come out of your commission's report?

Tom Harrison: Categorically, yes. Absolutely we will. To explain your earlier point about what other opportunities we have to impose sanctions through the disciplinary and regulatory process, Meena, do you want to just cover that off quickly?

Meena Botros: As we have covered, we have the regulatory role and that is what we are doing with the investigation. The sanctions for that will be delivered by an independent cricket discipline commission. As well as that, as Mr Harrison has set out, we are also the promoter and there are sanctions that we can bring to bear through that, so the major



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matches that you have referred to and also funding through our county partnership agreement. There are different ways in which ECB can bring sanctions to bear on the counties in relation to this area.

Q211 **Chair:** Thank you. Mr Harrison, one final question from me. On the Colin Graves Trust and its relationship with Yorkshire, many people outside the game do not quite understand the way in which it has Yorkshire in the palm of its hand because it has the debt, and the trustees and their role in this debacle, and the fact that, according to Mr Hutton, they were a roadblock to reform of the board and changes at Yorkshire. What are you going to do about that trust and its relationship with Yorkshire? That appears to me to be desperately unhealthy for the game.

Tom Harrison: One of the sanctions that we were asked to commission that we handed down to Yorkshire a couple of weeks ago was that the ECB's executive had been asked by the ECB board to commission a governance review of Yorkshire County Cricket Club. I think all of that will get caught up in that governance review, which we will make available to this Committee.

Q212 **Chair:** Do you recognise that it is a potentially major problem?

Tom Harrison: I do.

Chair: Thank you. That concludes our session today. Thank you very much for your evidence.