

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

Oral evidence: What next for the National Lottery? HC 619

Tuesday 30 November 2021

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 30 November 2021.

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Julian Knight (Chair); Kevin Brennan; Steve Brine; Alex Davies-Jones; Clive Efford; Julie Elliott; John Nicolson; Jane Stevenson.

Questions 1 to 93

Witnesses

[I](#): Adam Peaty MBE, Olympic Swimmer, Ellie Robinson MBE, Paralympic Swimmer, and Lauren Rowles MBE, Paralympic Rower.

[II](#): Anna Powell-Smith, Founder, Centre for Public Data, and Dr Sasha Stark, Senior Researcher Responsible Gambling Council.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Adam Peaty MBE, Ellie Robinson MBE and Lauren Rowles MBE.

Chair: This is the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee and a hearing into the National Lottery. We are joined in our first panel by three athletes: Adam Peaty, swimming, Lauren Rowles, rowing, and Ellie Robinson, swimming. Adam, Lauren and Ellie, thank you very much for joining us today.

Before I start, does anyone wish to make any declarations? Samuel Montagu?

Clive Efford: Do you think I should? I am the chair of a charity, Samuel Montagu Youth Centre in my constituency.

Chair: That may have been in receipt of Lottery money.

Clive Efford: Good point.

Q1 **Chair:** Thank you very much for joining us. I will start with Lauren Rowles and then move across the panel. Could you please outline for us exactly what the money from the Lottery has meant for you as an athlete?

Lauren Rowles: An incredible amount. I started out in the elite world of Paralympic sport in 2012 after contracting the rare neurological disease, transverse myelitis, which left me in a wheelchair from the age of 13. I was inspired by London 2012. I went to watch London with my mother and decided that that was what I wanted to do. I got immersed in the world of Paralympic sport that I never knew existed and for a disabled 13 year-old at the time, it was incredible to know that this world of elite level sport existed and the Paralympic side. I soon got sucked into trying to get into Paralympic sport.

My dream was to go to the Paralympic Games and I got sucked into doing wheelchair racing and athletics and following their development pathway as a young 14 year-old. Two years later I went to the Commonwealth Games to represent England and got on to their development programme. It was just after that that I transitioned into rowing, being selected and talent-scouted out of the athletics programme into the rowing programme. As soon as I go on to the rowing programme, they saw my potential. The only thing I did not have was the funding behind me that I needed to be able to excel in the sport so they backed me and said, "We want to invest in you. We see the talent" and five minutes later I won a silver medal award at the World Championships. A year later, I won my first gold medal at the Paralympic Games.

Without that funding from rowing initially I never would have been able to start in the sport. I came from Birmingham. I didn't have the money. I came from a working-class family. I did not have sufficient funds, like the people around me that I was training with, to be able to excel in that sport. It was the backing of the National Lottery and that funding that allowed me to go and win that medal 18 months on at the Paralympic



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Games. Without it, I would never have been in the position that I am in today with my second Paralympic gold medal.

Adam Peaty: Where do I start? Pretty much the same scenario. I came from a working-class family, no money for sport, no money, really, for anything. The UK Lottery, SportsAid or TASS, where the money came from, was vital. That was a lifeline for me and having that lifeline, especially at a young age, was not just about the financial, it was also the hope, that someone believed in me. Being able to have my own APA, my own support, through SportsAid, being able to pay for racing suits, which cost £400 a pop—you wear them three times and you have to chuck them and get another one. You have to pay for hotels and if you are coming down to London, that is two grand for seven days' racing in London. How is that possible if my mum is earning 12 grand a year?

For me, it's all about having access to the financial side and the support but also access to the belief, that someone goes, "You can win at the Olympics in four years. I am going to give you what you need". It is as simple as that for me.

Ellie Robinson: I will jump right in. If my knowledge is correct, I think National Lottery funding makes up 60% of our funding. Particularly in para-sports, there is not the same opportunity for sponsorship as there is in, say, able-bodied sport just because the sport is not as developed so Paralympic athletes rely upon funding even more. As Adam said, swimming is a particularly costly sport, for example staying in hotels for competitions, which at the height of the season can be every two weeks, even once a week when you have trials and qualifying events.

As well as that, there are the fees for any swimming club, which you pay monthly. Particularly nowadays, the cost of hiring a pool is going up because there is a lot of financial strain, so swimming clubs are having to put up the cost of their squad as well, and it is not just hotels but petrol money as well. Our qualifiers are in Glasgow in Scotland and for anyone like me, living in the East Midlands, there is petrol money up to Glasgow and back again and hotels there, and getting the train, too. One year, to enhance performance, I flew up there.

Para-swimmers do not have the sponsorship opportunities because para-swimming is not as well-known as able-bodied swimming. That is not a criticism but it is younger, not as developed, not as widely known or widely watched, so even more do we need the funding to sustain the athletic lifestyle and also to develop areas elsewhere. Athletes eventually, when we reach the end of our careers, understand that particularly in para-swimming we can't make a living off swimming so we need to support education and a university degree as well. We need the money to be able to support our next step. A lot of athletes, if they do not go through education and do not have something to fall back on when they finish swimming, find themselves without qualifications and with few routes to follow, particularly if their sport does not have the same exposure as professional sport.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q2 Chair: Ellie, Lauren said that she would not be where she is today without that money. Would you say the same thing?

Ellie Robinson: I can say that I am quite fortunate in the family that I have grown up in but I would definitely say that I would not have had the same access. Last year in particular was quite an expensive year. It would have really taken it out of me because I had injuries in my hip. Had I not been granted the money to undergo scans and all sorts of diagnostic treatment and so on, it would have been a very difficult year. Starting out, I can say that I had a lot of help from my family, but as it went on I definitely found myself relying a lot more upon funding because I did not have sponsorship as an athlete and the costs of diagnosing an injury, and then maintenance, was quite significant.

Q3 Chair: Lauren, how does an Athlete Performance Award work? Is it for a specified period? Do you have to bid for the amount of money you need? Do you have to justify it? Give us a brief overview, if you would.

Lauren Rowles: The APA is granted by UK Sport and is completely based on your performance as an athlete. Maybe when you first join a team, you will be put on to a development pathway if that sport sees fit and if they see the potential in you they will make a statement to UK Sport saying, "We think this individual is worth our structure" and outline it. At the start of the year, you get a structure in place, what the policy is, the funding policy, and how you would get on to it so you quite clearly know, as an athlete, what it takes. That is outlined. There are different categories and different amounts of funding based upon your performance in that year, that season.

It depends on different sports but the funding cycle usually runs from 1 December to 30 November and your funding will be granted for a year. If you were to retire or be pulled up for disciplinary reasons, you would come off the funding and different transition periods for that have been put in place, depending on how long you have been based in the sport. In the past, it has been three months and that has recently changed but depending on how long you have been in there. UK Sport will make a case and if you are gold medallists, as we are, and you have done well in your sport, excelled, you receive the top level of funding but you have to continue to perform to stay on that level. If I did not do as well in a year, if I was injured, and won a silver medal, my funding would drop significantly.

Q4 Chair: From a gold to a silver medal, the funding drops?

Lauren Rowles: Yes, particularly in para-sport. Every sport will be different, depending on what sport you do.

Adam Peaty: Can I add to that?

Chair: Please.

Adam Peaty: If you go from eighth to ninth, again it is a final/not a final, especially in my sport, and that can cost you £10,000, £15,000. Unfortunately, if you earn over I think £65,000, it is means-tested. I



HOUSE OF COMMONS

have not received National Lottery funding directly, through an APA, since 2015 I believe, but I receive it through the services and through UK Sport.

Q5 **Chair:** Is that because you are very marketable?

Adam Peaty: I am fortunate enough, yes, and I have a good team, but to get to that point you have to win. I was already a world champion by the time I got to that point and that was only an extra year to win the Olympic gold and get a world record. It is getting to that point and then sustaining it, but I don't think it is right that you can go from one gold medal, get an injury, and they go, "We're going to take support away from you and put more pressure on you to get back to fitness". I think it should be more of a long-term thing.

Q6 **Chair:** That is your impression of it right now, that it is quite brutalist if you are injured. Ellie, you said that you were injured, or have been injured recently. Are you now concerned about that income stream through the Athlete Performance Award?

Ellie Robinson: I don't want to say my injury has forced me to retire because I did retire on my own terms as well. However, I cannot continue swimming with my injury so I am now in that transitional period—I think it is three months—where I continue to receive my APA. However, one of the things that have helped me in this transition period is that I am doing a degree with the Open University and I also have opportunities outside, which have been given to me through my education. One of those is a literary project.

Any kind of literary project will be developed through education, through school and university, so I like to believe that I am quite lucky that I am able to fall back on something. I am able to fall back on something and am not just left without any source of support or funding. I want to say that even though I am comfortable, it is because I have had quite a good set-up through the education that I have been able to afford through my funding. It is helping to develop not just the athlete but the person after that as well.

Q7 **Chair:** Did you have that in mind when you started off on this road that you needed to have that educational backing? Also, is there a way in which, for Paralympic athletes, where there may be a greater preponderance of injury—I don't know that—the challenge you face with Athlete Performance Awards is greater and more acute when it comes to the potential to lose money?

Ellie Robinson: I don't know about rowing but I would not say that in swimming we necessarily get more injuries. Able-bodied swimmers are also prone to injury. I will not claim that para-swimmers are more prone to injury. However, yes, that education is vital. I know that I cannot make a living off Paralympic swimming. I need something afterwards.

Another thing that affects it is classification. We had this quite recently. In 2018, a lot of swimmers lost their classification and so did not become



HOUSE OF COMMONS

competitive. I remember one swimmer saying, "I haven't got A-levels, I haven't got very good GCSE grades, I don't have anything to fall back on". He really struggled because he suddenly lost his classification, he was off the programme, and he didn't have that next step in place. Particularly in para-sport, it is the sustainability that the APA provides.

Chair: Life beyond sport and the idea of building towards it.

Ellie Robinson: Yes.

Q8 **Chair:** Lauren, I saw you nodding at certain points when Ellie was speaking. Do you have anything to add to that?

Lauren Rowles: Yes. I don't think being disabled makes us any more prone to injury. If anything, we can work through injury even more and do not realise that it is happening. For us, particularly in rowing—if you have ever done rowing you will know how hard it is—injuries happen, on both the Olympic and the Paralympic sides. I was injured two years in a row, just after 2016.

Q9 **Chair:** But is the difficulty with financing made more acute if you are injured if you are a Paralympic athlete rather than an able-bodied athlete? Is that so? Is it more difficult to cope with the potential financial fall-off?

Lauren Rowles: I would not have been able to continue for the two years that I was injured if I had been taken off. I would have been working in Tesco. I started university and left university. My story is opposite to Ellie's in the sense of what my APA and National Lottery funding has allowed me to do. I was suffering from mental health issues after 2016. Anyone coming from the fall-off after an Olympic or Paralympic Games will know how deep that can go and mental health was not supported by the sport at the time, I believe. Off the back of 2016, I was also injured. I had to have spinal surgery as well, which was covered through National Lottery funding and I am very grateful for that.

After that, I made the decision to step away from university and focus on my health, both physical and mental. Without that, I would not have been able to leave university and within that year, I excelled. I came back from having injuries and I went on to win in the World Championships in 2019. That has allowed me to conquer so much more in the sport. It has allowed me to build my own business, build my own profile, and make change in the community. I have wanted to do sport ever since I was a kid. I have also been disabled and am part of the LGBT community and I wanted to create change for the environments that we live in, where there is still a lot of work to be done.

I am now able to use my platform as an athlete to go out there and inspire the next generation of kids to take up sport and also change the environment that we now function in. For me, that is very purposeful. Without my APA, I would not have been able to do that. As a result of my participation in sport, other children's lives have been affected and we



HOUSE OF COMMONS

now have greater participation. I know that because I work with a lot of young kids and that is what they tell me.

Q10 **Chair:** Did you say that mental health issues were not covered?

Lauren Rowles: No. I think we are growing within sport and we are talking about it more but certainly at the time there was no support off the back of an Olympic or Paralympic Games.

Adam Peaty: No way, not at all.

Q11 **Chair:** That was not part of the APA. Is it now part of the APA?

Adam Peaty: I don't think it is an APA thing. If a governing body is getting funded, and especially through UK Sport, it should be a given thing anyway—it is only recently, as Lauren said—for your lifestyle coaches or the people that the governing body invests in, to give to the athletes.

Athletes perform better but it comes down to the question of how much is a gold medal worth to the country and I think you are getting a bargain. We need more. That is the way it is for me. If you look at how much is invested—I think it is £20 million for swimming every four years—we are getting more gold medals. We are one of the most successful teams at the Olympic Games and we want to see more. I think every sport wants to see more. Let's invest it in the right areas.

Ellie Robinson: One thing that I mentioned to British Para-Swimming quite repeatedly—I think it was maybe once each year because I like to give them feedback—is that we need a clinical psychologist, not just a sports psychologist, either a clinical psychologist instead of a sports psychologist or both.

A lot of the issues that particularly para-athletes have—I don't want to speak on the behalf of others, it might be different—I know, and for me, is that there is a lot more than just sport when it comes to para-sport. It is our identity. There is obviously an identity struggle for most people with a disability and sport seems to paper over the cracks so beneath the sports psychology element, there is a lot more deep-rooted feeling in there. I have been saying for a while that we need a clinical psychologist and the response that I have had from the national governing body is, "We can't afford one". I don't know. I don't want to blame anyone in this situation because it is obviously about where you are distributing your money so I am not going to blame Lottery funding or UK Sport or anyone like that because it could be the NGB, but that is just something that I picked up on.

Another point about the differences in injuries between able-bodied sport and para-sport—I know with swimming you have three performance centres, don't you?

Adam Peaty: Yes, we do.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Ellie Robinson: There is one in Stirling, one in Loughborough and one in Bath. Para-swimming has only one, in Manchester, so if you are not in Manchester—I was doing two and a half hour drives pretty much once every week, or every two weeks, to have scans and diagnostic tests and it got to the point where I had to relocate to Manchester. I had to rent a flat in Manchester so I could train, so I could have access to the physio every single day because back at home, I was paying I think it was £55 a session for 40 minutes with my physio at home. The cost was immense but I knew that this was my last year in sport and I was fortunate enough to be able to endure that, but I think when you have three national performance centres, you are going to be close to at least one of them so you can travel to the performance centre and back again. It is not ideal, but it is more ideal than two and a half hours a day.

Adam Peaty: I can add to that, I think you said “endure”. You should not have to endure it. You are representing your country, so why is funding not more available to you?

Lauren Rowles: I can add to that. Part of the requirement for your funding is that you are based at the national training centre. If you cannot commit full time to train at the national training centre, you will not receive full funding. If I decided now to step away and do part business and part-time sport, even if I won a gold medal, I would not receive my full APA funding because I am not spending my full time at the training centre. We train in Reading. I come from Birmingham. I was driving for two years. My mum gave up her job to drive me to and from training for two years. That was the commitment we made. I then moved down, because our training centre is based in Reading, and the cost of living down south is incredibly higher than it is living up north. It is based also on what sport you do but we all get the same funding. I could buy a house in Manchester today for myself but I am spending 80% of my income, just trying to live down south and travelling, month to month, just on my APA.

Q12 **Chair:** Paralympic athletes often have to move?

Lauren Rowles: Olympic athletes, too, depending on what sport you do and where the performance centres are, which we don’t determine, and you can end up being moved around. My partner is part of the wheelchair basketball team and they have been moved from Loughborough to Worcester and then up to Sheffield. They have now been moved away and are back at Loughborough. They have had to move their lives around. These people cannot build homes and families because they are constantly moving around the country to the new performance centres that are being put in place. Unless you are training full-time there, you will not get your full funding.

Q13 **Jane Stevenson:** Those are some very interesting comments. I am interested in when you got into sport—and I know families make a lot of sacrifices, driving you to practice early every morning and all those things—at what point do you become aware that funding will become available if you get to a certain level? Was that in your game plan as you



HOUSE OF COMMONS

became more and more involved in swimming and rowing? Are there lesser support awards before you qualify for a full award?

Adam Peaty: In my scenario, in swimming, especially in my sport, you have a time when you are going to hit. If you make a final, you call it podium potential—our next generation of Olympians, Olympic gold medallists. If you reach that time, you are considered. I am not sure how it works now. I am not familiar with it so I don't want to speak on it, but when I was back there, it was basically at the discretion of the head coach of the NGB. That is how it worked for me. Before that, I think my first funding was £3,000 and it was a lifeline. I can finally do—not even do well, just do. I can do. I can turn up and represent and I used every single opportunity and I am glad I went through that because it makes me respect what I do every single day now. Before that, however, you rely on SportsAid, which is still under UK Sport. It gives money to people who may be missed. Then you have TASS but other than that, you have local companies.

I am fortunate enough to live around a few good local companies, good people, but it is £500, £1,000, to help you get to a world championships or Commonwealth Games. You are relying on the local economy and local people to support you, or Rotary clubs, and so many athletes fall through the gap, especially teenagers. That is the time when the choice is if I am not funded, I need to go for my education, I need to support my family in the future. I had that conversation myself when I was 15. It was, "Am I going to make a good living out of swimming"? and thankfully I have had the career I have had so far, but I could have easily been missed if I hadn't had those £100, £250 donations from local clubs. At the elite level there isn't enough but at grass-roots level and everywhere in between, there needs to be way more, way more.

Q14 **Jane Stevenson:** When you got the tap on the shoulder—if it is a very quantifiable thing, if it is a time; I don't know how it works in rowing, if there is a similar very easily spottable potential—do you think you were supported through the application to apply for an APA? Was that an easy process once it had been established that you had great potential?

Adam Peaty: APA, yes, is very straightforward. All you have to do is get mean -tested, how much you earn, show all your bank stuff. Back then, I didn't really have much anyway. That is fairly easy. I don't know how it works for you but we get colour coded on our performance, our height, our potential to be a champion, all these kinds of demographics and data behind us of the years and years that we have been growing up through the system, hence why it can affect athletes, "I am not good enough. I am not reaching this data".

Thankfully, I didn't really care. That is just my personal thing because I'm like, "I'm going to win anyway" because that is my personality but so many people fall through that and go, "I'm not good enough" and where is the support for those athletes to say, "Yes, you are good enough, we just need to find a way around it" and that is something that I work with for a lot of kids through my own clinics after Olympics. I try to give back



HOUSE OF COMMONS

as much as I possibly can because I know how much—obviously the kids will need money—belief they will need. Again, it is that APA, solely the belief, “I have been given a lifeline. I have been given this opportunity” and that is invaluable.

Q15 **Jane Stevenson:** Is that similar in para-swimming?

Ellie Robinson: I’m definitely not denying everything you said, but I was very young. It must have been 2014 and I was just turned 13 and I was on my first programme, I was podium potential. I was so naive. I was so blissfully naive, so I cannot comment too much because a lot of it just went over my head and it was all kind of done for me. I was on the England Talent programmes, which is a grass-roots programme, and then moved on to podium potential. What it seemed like for me was that everything was overseen by the national governing body so my transition was relatively smooth.

Q16 **Jane Stevenson:** Rowing, Lauren, how do you feel about it? Does it work in a similar way?

Lauren Rowles: It is completely discretionary to the coaching team and the performance team. They judge your performance. They judge your potential and they advise. They are the ones who make the bids. You don’t just go up and ask for the funding. They wouldn’t just give you that. You definitely would not do that, go up to your performance director and say I’ve just been in the sport for a couple of months or whatever it is, a year, a couple of years.

As young teenagers, as we are when we all join the sports, we would not have gone up and gone, “Just give me some money”. We were doing sport because we loved it, it was our passion, it was what we wanted to do and we wanted to reach the top level. Then you get the pressures that come with that, and the expenses of doing it, and when you get higher and higher and higher and you start excelling in the sport, it becomes more expensive.

Then you get pressures from your families. We were driving to and from Reading and my mum was like, “You need some funding” and she spoke to my coach and said, “What support could Lauren have?” and then we had a conversation and they were able to grant me some funding but that was in a very exceptional case because they saw some talent in me. I had never been to a competition before so they did not know how well I could do. They just gave me, like Adam said, £3,000—I think it was a couple of thousand pounds—and that was just to get me through until the world championships until I delivered a performance. Then my grant was based upon that performance at the world championships. I had to prove myself and that was just keeping my head above water so we could just live. Like I said, my mum gave up her job to be able to do it.

Then after the silver medal I got an APA off the back of it. It is exactly the same. We have to hit times, targets, we have to hit certain times both in the boat and out of the boat. There are quite clear definitions of what you need to be able to hit to get your grant.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q17 Jane Stevenson: Do you know people who you feel had the potential who fell through the gaps in your clubs as you were coming up because that funding was not there?

Adam Peaty: As a generalisation, I don't think enough is given to low-income families. That is it. How the APA works is solely on performance and potential performance but does not take into consideration how much your parents earn, how much wealth they have, or their assets. It does not take account of anything but performance, so what are we doing for all those families, those kids, those athletes, who may be missed, solely on the financial spectrum? Is it the right model? I don't know.

Can it be better? I think it would be way more efficient to put that money into areas where families are desperate for their children to carry on because if they don't, they are just going to quit and we have lost a potential future champion. If I had not got that, I physically would not have been able to do the sport. I would not have been able to do it, no way. Absolutely no way.

Q18 Jane Stevenson: Do you think the funding should be filtered down in para-sport as well to support more people at the beginning before they get to elite level?

Lauren Rowles: Quite frankly, to do para-sports, most sports, you need adaptive equipment—wheelchair-racing chair, an adapted boat—and those things cost thousands and thousands of pounds because it is adaptive equipment and everything has to be custom made pretty much. My own wheelchair cost £6,000 for me to be just able to move out of my bed in the morning. To access sport, for my first wheelchair-racing chair we had a community get together and my community fundraised for me and paid for my first ever racing chair, which was £4,000. That was just for me to do the sport.

Without the likes of charities for sport—we are great because, as disabled kids, unfortunately you do get marketed and it's "Help the disabled person" and that is great, but youths on the Olympic side maybe do not have the sob story to get that kind of funding so there is also a disparity there. On the para-side you can get more charity-based stuff because potentially you have a good story and it may be marketable, but maybe not so much on the Olympic side.

I know when I was growing up, I wanted to be an Olympian but unfortunately I had a disability that got in the way of me being on the Olympic track but I would have never made it as an Olympian. I had the desire but did I have the funds to do it? I don't know. With the support of my community, from charities that have invested in me over the years, I have been able to do what I have been able to do over the years, but it is thousands of pounds worth of technical equipment and when you add disability, you need even more because you need specialist equipment.

Jane Stevenson: I am thinking of the cost of your swimsuits. I had no idea it was quite that expensive to do sports.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Chair: An eye-opener for me as well.

- Q19 **Julie Elliott:** I am coming in here because I am very interested in what Adam Peaty said. I have first-hand experience of this. I have a granddaughter who is 10 and who swims in the City of Sunderland club. We live in a poor area and I have seen so many children who were scouted at swimming classes, started swimming at the club and then dropped off. Now I don't know directly if that is because of money but, as you say, the cost of swimming costumes, equipment—the flippers, the boards, the you-name-it—is about £150 a month, which for families in my area is not doable.

Adam Peaty: It is a lot of money.

- Q20 **Julie Elliott:** What do you think could be done? If we are losing this pool of talent at the beginning, by the time you get to some of these things further up that you are talking about, you have already lost a swathe of people who perhaps had the potential to be gold medal winners. What do you think could be done at that very low level to try to get as many people with potential starting out through the route rather than dropping off after a few months?

Adam Peaty: It is very complicated in the grand scheme of things, but also very simple: investment in facilities, supporting those facilities as much as you can so people do not have to rely on learn-to-swim programmes to prop up the energy bills, for example, and investment in coaches. Through the pandemic—I am pretty sure the data will come out—we are losing a lot of coaches.

We are losing a lot of potential too, because there is no incentive for kids who do make it through to turn into coaches. They are like, "I'm so fed up with being beaten down and having to fight for everything, having no support from the swimming club or any governing body for me to compete" and people who leave the sport end up hating it because they have been treated that way. It is down to the coaches. Where is the money? Can we have more money? Can we have more support to give more coaches, better coaches, more education in how to be a good coach?

It might be different in Sunderland but I know it is the same in Derby and around the country. We are losing so many talented, potential Olympians at around ages 12 to 18 because they do not have the right guidance and out-of-sport is more appealing because, obviously, it is a little bit easier. Sport is extremely brutal because if you are not good enough, you are cut off and that is it. There is no question about it and how you deal with that—not everyone is fit for that.

That was a very complicated answer but, like everything, it comes down to money and giving it to the right areas, the leisure centres that are closing at an alarming rate. It will cost you more money in the long run because sport gives so many health benefits and mental health benefits.

- Q21 **Julie Elliott:** We don't have wealthy businesses. We are not a wealthy



HOUSE OF COMMONS

area. Do you think there should be some kind of pool of equipment for kids starting out to dip into, to help them with their equipment as they start out. Do you think that type of thing would help bring people through?

Adam Peaty: I think so, but would it be mismanaged? How could you manage that with thousands of kids, tens of thousands of kids coming through? You can't share racing trunks because of the different sizes and they mould to your body. I think there should just be more support on the whole. In swimming and rowing you need good heated water, a good leisure centre that is clean and has good energy and good people around it, and you have to have coaches who are going to go to the nth degree and say, "You can be a champion" instead of just turning up because it is their job. That is the difference. It is like anything.

A lot of coaches are volunteers. Why are we not giving them a little bit of the money that elite sport gets? I am grateful for it, but if we could only raise the bar and have more funding everywhere. There are so many people who are lost and I think sport is a great method of dealing with that, especially from a health point of view. It would cost you less than the NHS in the long run because if people are fitter, they are healthier. It is that simple.

Q22 **Chair:** I know there are things to follow up on but I will just play devil's advocate here. There is a school of thought that suggests that maybe we focus too much on elite athletes rather than on the grass roots. What do you say to that?

Adam Peaty: I almost agree—almost—because I am an elite athlete and it kind of goes against what I am doing, but there is not enough support for the grass roots, not enough at all, in any sport. It is seen as you do it for the fun, you can do it, there's a lane, and that is the system that I came up through.

Your parents, or local companies, have to cover everything and elite sport does get a lot of money but swimming is one of those sports where if you are not the best, you do not get any sponsors. Even if you are elite in that sport, you still have to rely on the APA. You still have to rely on funding to represent your country at an Olympic level and win Olympic medals for them. At the grass-roots level, however, no, there is nothing. Should they have a bigger share of the pie? Yes, around that middle teenage section especially, because I think the talent will come through. If there is more support there, everyone wins.

Lauren Rowles: Can I add from the para-side that even if you are the best, you don't get the sponsors. I sit here as someone who has done everything anyone could ever have done in my sport—world champion, European champion, double Paralympic champion—and I have only ever had one sponsor in my seven years of being on the team. Nobody is interested in para-sport and corporations are not willing to have us involved.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

I have to disagree a little bit with Adam in saying that if I did not get funding, I would have to leave the sport. I cannot sustain living. I have tried. Trust me, I have tried. I have quite a big profile. But a lot of what we do as Paralympians is often for free because we are trying to help the next generation.

To add to the leisure centre point is the question of places being accessible. Most rowing clubs are not accessible. Access is horrendous. You wouldn't believe it. Even access to here today, and to everything, is just another barrier for disabled people. How are visually impaired people, hearing impaired people, people with different physical disabilities, learning difficulties, going to excel if we cannot even get into the building?

Q23 Chair: Yes, a lot of buildings are very old, rowing clubs, like that place in London. I have been rowing on one occasion. I am afraid I caught a crab—I think that is the phrase—and I never rowed again but I noted at the time that it is a minefield. You walk into the building and there is no room and it seems to be a very difficult environment for anyone.

Lauren Rowles: It is about access to water—you need rivers and lakes—and trying to get into them. You will see most of the time even for our biggest race, the Boat Race, Oxford and Cambridge, the rowers get down there, get their wellies on, and they walk out into the water. You would not see me as a wheelchair user doing that. You need pontoons, landing stages, that you can use. Trying to get out on to the Thames—most London boat clubs cannot do that, cannot provide those facilities, because of how steep the banks are, so you cannot just turn up at any club. I would not be able to turn up to most clubs in London and I am at the top of my sport. They would not be able to take me in because, first, they do not have the access and, secondly, they do not have the equipment that I need.

Q24 Clive Efford: Following up on that, Lauren, does Lottery funding require a sport governing body to deal with the sorts of issues you are raising? It seems to me that if we want to make sport accessible, and we have had Lottery funding since 1994, the National Lottery should be making sure that through their funding they are encouraging sports to improve accessibility. Have you seen any evidence of that? Do you think that is an element of funding that should be brought in, that Lottery funding is dealing with the issue of making sport accessible?

Lauren Rowles: It should be the responsibility of the national governing bodies to make sure of it. We might as well talk about access. My national governing body is British Rowing. It covers everything from starting out all the way through to the very top.

Maybe there should be something, a body, that makes sure that national governing bodies are ensuring that there is access, there are those pots of money, knowing where the money goes. I guess that is UK Sport but UK Sport does not necessarily cover all the way from the bottom to top. Maybe what we need is somebody to look at that, look at where that



HOUSE OF COMMONS

money goes, but there isn't anybody. National governing bodies, Paralympic communities and disabled people are shoved right to the back of the list.

It is only through us talking about it and making a shout about it—we are a Paralympic team of nine people across how many Olympic people. We are shouting about it, saying there needs to be access for disabled people because there are not enough people in the sport at the moment and we do not have that next generation below us coming up. We are worried about funding for our team, but it is because most people cannot get access to a rowing club. We, as athletes, have to shout about it, go around talking about it, to get anything done.

Ellie Robinson: Could I build on that, please? I do agree. It is about the national governing bodies being efficient with their spending. Particularly in para-sport, in today's society there is an urge to have more people involved, which is obviously right because disabled people need access to those routes to sport, and I think we need to make grass roots more accessible.

But there is one thing that I have found in para-swimming and I know this may sound quite harsh but I think sport is quite harsh. There is such an urge to get as many para-swimmers as possible into the sport that we are funding athletes who are not going to make it. Para-swimming in particular has moved on quite a lot—well, most para-sports now. It is not a turn-up. You do not get medals for participation anymore. It is elite sport and I think we need to focus on making the grass roots much more accessible so we have a wider group of—in my sport, para-swimmers—to choose from. At the minute we are just trying to encourage as many young para-swimmers into the sport as possible. We are funding them.

When I say that I don't think they are going to make it, that is just because only a few athletes do. Not everyone can win a gold medal because at the end of the day there is only one. I think we need to focus on having a bigger group, a bigger pool of swimmers to choose from. To choose only the ones that have the potential to do it and then investing the money in them because they are going to get results, we need to identify those people.

I think this is where I can be controversial sometimes. We need to focus more on competence rather than just let's get as many disabled people as possible into elite sport. Disabled people obviously need to do sport for leisure but when we look at elite sport, we need to be picking only the most competent para-athletes because this is elite sport. This is not medals for participation anymore. We need to make sure that we are identifying the most competent athletes. I do not have much more to add to that.

Q25 **Kevin Brennan:** Thank you to our witnesses. You are being refreshingly candid, which is not always the case with people who appear before this Committee.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Our inquiry is into the future of the Lottery as well as being very interested in how it has affected you so far. To what extent, Ellie, as part of getting some Lottery funding, do you have to promote the Lottery itself? Are there any responsibilities that come with it?

Ellie Robinson: There are more so now.

Q26 **Kevin Brennan:** What sorts of things do you have to do?

Ellie Robinson: When I went to Rio in 2016 I was just turned 15. In loads of interviews I remember loads of people thanking National Lottery and in all honesty I had absolutely no idea what they were thanking them for. I was like, "Why is everyone thanking the National Lottery? What have they done?" It must have been after Rio, maybe about 2018, that I discovered that 60% of our funding comes from the National Lottery. I understood later and I realised when I came back from Tokyo. When I was in Tokyo there was definitely more of a push to show gratitude and also to give the National Lottery the exposure as well.

Q27 **Kevin Brennan:** Were you told that? Were they saying, "You're not doing enough, you need to do more to say thank you at every opportunity"? Was that a formal thing?

Ellie Robinson: It is an interesting one because they always ask you to try to slip it into an interview answer but I think if we do it in a forced way, it doesn't come across well. If you just say "National Lottery" in the middle of a sentence, it comes across as forced sounding. I have seen the National Lottery adverts recently, the ones where they support good causes. I think we need to make it blindingly obvious that the National Lottery funds athletes. I am an athlete and I did not even know, so to make the general public realise that they are funding us, you need to make it blindingly obvious.

Also, the Olympics is very widely watched but afterwards the public may not be watching every single interview post-games where we are thanking the National Lottery, so perhaps more in TV adverts where they have the good causes.

Q28 **Kevin Brennan:** I will come on to that. Lauren, do you want to say something about this?

Lauren Rowles: I think we are living in a fear culture at the moment, for two reasons. First, your APA being taken off you, your performance year to year, and whether you do well enough to get your funding. Secondly, because you are constantly reminded that National Lottery funds this. There is also a fear of where does the National Lottery go? My generation do not play the National Lottery. My nan and my mum are the people who play the National Lottery. People my age do not play the National Lottery, so there is a fear of where does that go, because there are strains on funding.

Q29 **Alex Davies-Jones:** Do you play the National Lottery?

Lauren Rowles: We are not allowed to. As athletes, we are not allowed.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Ellie Robinson: I didn't know that.

Kevin Brennan: There might be a further inquiry following this.

Lauren Rowles: No, we are not allowed to do any sort of betting or anything like that as part of our Lottery funding. We sign up for that.

Q30 **Kevin Brennan:** You were saying that there is a culture fear about losing your funding.

Lauren Rowles: Yes.

Q31 **Kevin Brennan:** Does that extend to the extent that you think you are being told if you don't do enough to promote the National Lottery you might lose your money?

Lauren Rowles: It is in the sense you know that National Lottery funding is being spread very thinly, and UK Sport had to change its structure to accommodate the fact that sport is getting very expensive at the elite level. For us to continue winning gold medals requires more money because other countries now have systems in place similar to ours.

We were some of the first people to do it in GB and that is why we went through an influx of medal winning for the last few Olympics and Paralympics. Now we are seeing the strain because the Dutch, Germans, Australians all have similar structures to ours, so they have the money to compete against us. Now it is literally based on who has got the most money, in a sense, to have the talent and to be able to take that talent, translate it and deal with the pressure of that.

There is a fear culture. I remember every interview I did—obviously it was all online in Tokyo—had above it, "Please thank the National Lottery".

Q32 **Kevin Brennan:** When you say "had above it", what do you mean?

Lauren Rowles: It had a screen above the webcam with a little message that said, "Thank the National Lottery in your interview" on every single laptop, TV, anything that I ever did. My mum did a radio interview back from here at 3.00 am in the morning, and she was told, "Please thank the National Lottery in whatever you say". I did a TV show off the back of Tokyo and we were actually contracted that we had say, "Please thank the National Lottery" in that interview piece.

Q33 **Kevin Brennan:** Okay. Adam, I can see you are dying to dive in.

Adam Peaty: My perspective is different. I don't get APA and I have no fear.

Kevin Brennan: Would you have had fear when you did get APA?

Adam Peaty: I don't know, maybe. Yes, especially at the start, but I don't think I would have had fear. Everything for me has to come across genuine, it has to be authentic. I think the National Lottery can play on



HOUSE OF COMMONS

that, "Let's build the stories around the athletes we are supporting, let's send it to the public. Why are we not telling the stories of these kids who go from nothing and then take on the world as an Olympic champion?" That is more genuine than saying, "You need to do this, you need to do that". For me, I don't get it so I can't really comment. I have not had it for seven years and it may be different.

When we came home from Tokyo for the British swimming team—because we had to fly home literally two days after we had finished competing because of Covid—we had a nice media press gathering and that did wonders for the National Lottery. When you do that and come back after the success of the Olympic Games, "This is what you have invested in and this is what you have got", is a better and efficient way of telling the public.

Ellie Robinson: I think it perhaps highlights the difference between para-swimming and para-rowing. You have just had me saying, "We are funding athletes that, in my opinion, are not going to make it and have not made it", and then Lauren saying, "You live in fear because you know that the funding could run out". There is probably a bit of disparity between the sports.

Q34 **Kevin Brennan:** There was a big campaign around the time of the Tokyo Olympics—in fact I think in advance of the Tokyo Olympics—to try to link National Lottery funding very much with the individual stories of athletes. Lauren, were you aware of that campaign? Do you think there is enough public awareness that it is the Lottery that funds a lot of what you are doing?

Lauren Rowles: No, I don't think there is. I speak to my grandparents' friends and they all play the National Lottery. They say to me, "How do you earn money? What is your job?" and I say "I am an athlete". I ask, "Do you play the National Lottery?" and they will say yes or no. I say, "That money goes directly towards sport, and other things as well. You are funding me being able to go and do what I do in Tokyo", and they go, "Wow". They really had no idea.

Q35 **Kevin Brennan:** How do you feel about the fact that it is those people who fund what you do?

Lauren Rowles: Incredibly humbled, the fact that people want to support our nation to go on and not only win medals but, basically, rowing and sport saved my life and has encouraged me on a greater path than I ever could have believed. Without that and people backing that—like Adam says, that belief in you that somebody has—I never would have excelled as much as I have.

Q36 **Kevin Brennan:** I am not one of them, but some cynics might say that the sudden big push more recently to emphasise how much National Lottery money goes to support wonderful athletes like yourselves might be related to the fact that the competition to run the National Lottery is under way and is due to be awarded in the near future.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

That is against the backdrop that in recent years the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons published a report that found that the returns for good causes from the National Lottery had not increased at the same rate as the profits of Camelot, who run the National Lottery, because they are a profit-making company. The report stated that returns for good causes were only 2% higher in 2016-17 than in 2009-10 whereas in the same period Camelot's profits were not 2% higher, they were 122% higher. What is your reaction to that, Adam?

Adam Peaty: I read about this a few days ago. It is hard because it is gambling. I don't gamble myself, but everyone is free to do what they want to do. Is the good causes to make them look good? Are we funded to make them look good, in a sense? If we are doing that or we are supported on these journeys, which has been incredible, there should be more funding for that and there should be more funding for grass roots. If your profits are going up by 120% and the good causes have only gone up by 2%, it does not take anyone with two brain cells to go, "Hold on a minute, what is going on here?" I think with Camelot, or whoever gets the next award, there needs to be more back to society.

Ellie Robinson: Can I ask you a question?

Q37 **Kevin Brennan:** Of course, yes, just to finish the point Ellie, and then come in. Do you feel—and I do feel this actually—that that statistic in and of itself represents a massive moral failure on behalf of Camelot? Yes, they are entitled to make a profit because they were contracted under that basis to produce the most resources they can for good causes. But if the system turns out statistics like that, do you agree with me that that is a massive moral failure on their part?

Adam Peaty: I can't agree with what you would say but, for me, if I looked at my company and I knew what I was doing in the sense I was getting 120% profit and I was only giving 2% back to a good cause, I would feel morally depleted.

Q38 **Kevin Brennan:** Okay. Thank you Adam. Sorry, Ellie?

Ellie Robinson: I am assuming when you say "profit", that that is after they have paid out jackpots and things like that.

Kevin Brennan: Correct, yes.

Ellie Robinson: That changes my opinion. It is not just sport as well. I am doing a history and politics degree, so this is where the politician in me comes out. I see that there is a company making a massive profit and then there are much smaller British businesses that are really struggling in this time. Hospitality is really struggling, so it is not just UK sport but it is smaller businesses that are really struggling. Can we not share this profit out a bit?

Kevin Brennan: Okay. Well, Ellie, all I can say is that there is a future for you in this place if you want to pursue a political career. See you here in due course, probably long after I am gone.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q39 Steve Brine: Thanks very much for coming in. It has been really interesting, thank you. You have talked a lot about the system and the APAs and how they work. Obviously you are involved in the critique of the system because we are doing an inquiry and because we invited you. You are now national treasures and you are able to speak out.

Adam, you are able to speak out without fear or favour because you are not in receipt of any of this anymore, as you have said a couple of times, and, therefore, you are able to help shape the system going forward. Have you ever been asked by UK Sport the sort of questions that we are asking you now, looking back with hindsight, about how they can help the young lad start or the young girl starting out? Have you ever been asked to sit down with them and have this conversation?

Adam Peaty: I cannot recall any events or any communications where I was asked about anything really. I don't know if it is different, but I am just seen as someone who trains, gets medals, goes home, does it again in four years' time or next year. We don't really get invited in the financial sense or even the society sense of how we are involved in the grass-roots sports.

I am taking it off my own back to do my own thing. I run my own clinics, I invest back into the grass roots of sport, but that is off my own back and that is more of a thing for me to go there is not enough being done here at all. There is not enough from the elite level to go back down to the grass-roots level.

You never want to do something where you are forced to be there. Like anyone, if you are forced to be there you are not going to do a good job really, are you? If you go on your own back and go, "This is what I want to do, this is my story. I am going to make you the next superstar. I am going to invest in areas of Britain, or deprived areas of Britain, and invest in those kids"—no one is having those honest communications or conversations and I think that is what is lacking.

Q40 Steve Brine: Do you feel that being an Olympian double gold medallist—many congratulations by the way. It means a lot to the country, in answer to your question: how much is it worth to the country? A lot. Does it make a difference that you have won a gold medal, therefore you are feeling empowered to agitate on behalf of changing the system?

Adam Peaty: I don't think it gives you power; I think it gives you experience. I know exactly what it is like coming from literally the bottom all the way to the top and doing it again and then breaking all the records where no one has ever been and looking at the system and going, "That is how they are doing that now. Why they are being treated like that? Why have they not got money yet?" You can look and you can review back and sit back and almost have an over-plan of the battlefield, if that makes sense. I don't think it gives me power. First, it gives me a voice, which I am very grateful for. Secondly, it gives you something that you can have experience of, and I know it better than a lot of people.

Q41 Steve Brine: Lauren, what do you think? You were shaking your head



HOUSE OF COMMONS

when I asked about whether it empowers you.

Lauren Rowles: As Adam said, it is the experience that it gives to you. I never would have been able to sit so confidently and talk about it, even a few years ago in my career, but I have spent a long time in my sport understanding.

I am so aware of the APA restrictions particularly. Rowing has not done that well in the last Olympic Games and fortunately we did very well in the Paralympic side, but the stress of funding is a constant conversation between you, your coaches and the team managers, whoever it may be around you. There are constant worries and we have had to have considerations with the cuts and everything. As an athlete, that is a very prominent worry on your mind.

We have never been asked. I have never been asked by UK Sport to ever consider or talked to them or consult with them on anything. Like anything, my experience with having a disability enables me to consult and give my experience from the inside about living with a disability or whatever it may be and being a Paralympic rower. It gives us the platform to be able to talk about these things, and it probably gives us the confidence. To be able to do what we do, we are confident people.

We are at the point where we would like to speak out to make change for the next generation. We don't want others to have gone through what we necessarily may have gone through and the hardships we faced and could be rectified.

Adam says he is paving the way for the next generation and he sees where the flaws are and he is trying to fill in the cracks a little bit. I would love to be able to have the privilege to do what Adam does, run his private clinics and stuff like that and really invest back in. I would love to be able to do that. I do that in the sense that I work with my national governing body more to make sure that we are getting rowing clubs accessible and more people into the sport, and obviously using my platform to support that.

Q42 **Steve Brine:** When you said you feel humbled that the people play the Lottery and that helps you, do you think that people going to buy a Lottery ticket today for this weekend are thinking about helping elite UK athletes or do you think they want to win a prize? Sadly, you can't win, I am sorry to hear that. I didn't realise that until today.

Lauren Rowles: They probably most likely want to win a prize, but I know my mum plays every week because she wants to support me. My mum started playing the National Lottery since she knew about the fact that it went into sport. She had no idea where it went before and she has never done gambling, but she plays every single week now because she knows it supports me.

I think it depends. If you know somebody that is in receipt of the award and you know how much it means to them and you want to support



HOUSE OF COMMONS

them, that is your little thing that you can do every week, or whenever it may be, to help them. But every man on the street, definitely not.

- Q43 **Steve Brine:** Adam, you asked how much is it worth to the country for a gold medal. With morale during the recent Olympics, I would suggest an awful lot. The National Lottery puts a lot of money through UK Sport into elite athletes, but it is miniscule compared to the resources of Government, for instance. Are the resources that come from the National Lottery, through UK Sport as a distributor of that money, a way out for Government to not fund national sport?

Adam Peaty: I think it is from an athlete's perspective. I think the Government rely too much on the Lottery funding. When you go to the Olympics and we are third or second on the medal table the Government will get all the credit and go, "Yes, thank you". This is why I think the Government need to fill those cracks, fill the grass roots, invest in relationships, invest in the coaches and everything in between. The National Lottery can only do so much and we are talking about profit, we are talking about 2% back to good causes. It is a business and it has to have profit; we live in a capitalistic world or country. I think the Government can do more to fill in these cracks.

We are looking at incentives. I know a lot of countries—the USA does it, Singapore does it. I think if you win a gold medal in Singapore it is \$750,000, so give me some of that, please. If we have more incentives and tell them more of a story, obviously through the National Lottery but then have the incentive at the end with the Government saying, "You have won a gold medal, you have won a medal for the country, you have got to a final, here is a little bit of a thank you", the Government will get all the credit. I think the Government can do more to support the elite and definitely the grass roots. Stop closing leisure centres because it will bite you.

- Q44 **Steve Brine:** On the grass roots and the work that you do with your clinics and young people, do you see young boys and girls and think, "Wow, that takes me back. That looks very familiar"? I read that your mum said that you were scared of the water because your brothers told you sharks were coming out of the plugholes, which is terribly cruel but well done for overcoming that one. Do you meet young people and think, "There is something that you've got there", but you do not see that fulfilled, or is it too early yet?

Adam Peaty: It is very hard in sport because there are too many variables: how fast you grow, how much muscle you put on, what you eat, financial background. There are so many variables. It is really hard for UK Sport to put the money into the right person because they almost don't know. It is like if you are spread betting or you are doing something that is high risk, that is what sport is because someone might get injured. You can't put all your eggs in one basket, basically, so it is very hard to do. It is very hard to find talent and then be certain of that person going through. All you can do is best support them along that journey.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

I am going to start doing something in the next few years to support people individually. I am giving back financially to the people who I think are going to be the next Olympic champions. Should I have to do that? Absolutely not. Should the Government have to do that? Absolutely.

Q45 Steve Brine: Why are you able to do that? Is it because you have been so successful that you are able to build up resources, basically?

Adam Peaty: Yes, that is exactly what it is, but I have worked extremely hard to do that. I think any other athlete, like you said, financial or non-financial, should be giving back, especially to the grass roots and that middle gap of teenagers where we are losing so many people. It comes down to leadership and being around the right people. Especially with mental health, we will have a real problem on our hands post-Covid with closing leisure centres and this access. It is a community for these people and these kids, and if we don't have that who knows what they have got.

Steve Brine: Thank you very much. In your other recent venture, I think you were robbed.

Ellie Robinson: Would I be able to add to quite a few of those points? Sorry, I have been noting stuff in my head as you went along. You asked have I ever been asked or have I ever discussed this with UK Sport. There is a responsibility with UK Sport to discuss grass-roots level. That is where its responsibility lies in getting the right and the most competent athletes into the elite pathway. Once they are in the elite pathway I think there is a responsibility for the NGB to distribute the funding correctly. I have experienced a few examples where I believe that my NGB has not distributed the funding correctly. If I was to make two distinctions, I think responsibility for feedback for UK Sport is grass roots and for the NGB is the elite side of it.

On do I feel like I have more power, I think that with competence comes power, and obviously the successful athletes are the most competent athletes and do get a voice. A lot of the times when an athlete who has not made it tries to raise an opinion, it sometimes looks like they are bitter. When athletes who are successful and have made it complain—or not complain, but when they give constructive feedback—it looks more like constructive feedback, but with other athletes it may look like they are complaining.

Q46 Chair: Ellie, do you think, therefore, that elite athletes should be able to formally appraise their national governing body?

Ellie Robinson: The national governing body should have a degree of accountability. There should be more feedback. There should be perhaps the opportunity to speak to the leadership and voice your feedback. They can then come back to you and say, "This is what you said, this is our opinion, this is what we believe", and you can have an open discussion about that. I do think that.

Q47 Chair: Should that be a prerequisite of Lottery money going to the NGB?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Ellie Robinson: There should be an opportunity for athletes to give feedback about where they think the funding should go. For about five years I consistently said, "We need a clinical psychologist" and I didn't hear anything back. It was only after Tokyo, once I had retired, that I got told it was because we didn't have the finances to do it. We didn't have the resources to do it. I don't want to have the whole, "Athletes ruling the place", because you need a degree of leadership. There should be a port of call for athletes to provide feedback. There should be a central leadership, a central kind of head coach.

Q48 **Chair:** It is no different in the workplace.

Ellie Robinson: Yes, and the ability to feed back.

Chair: The fact is that during your time, effectively signed up on an APA, you are employed by that sport to be an elite athlete. At any workplace you would expect to have an appraisal and you would expect to be able to not just receive feedback but give feedback as well, confidentially, if necessary.

Ellie Robinson: Yes, I agree with that.

Q49 **Chair:** Is that something that you think should be built into any arrangement between national offers in NGBs?

Adam Peaty: I think so, but not on false hopes. I think it needs to go to the top top, people who control these decisions. I also know that resources are scarce and that UK Sport receives only so much money. Would these conversations even help? UK Sport is judged on how many medals it gets, how many gold medals it gets, how well has the sport done. "Okay, you have done really bad, we are taking your funding away. You have done really good, we are going to give it all to you." Is that the right model? I don't know, I am not qualified to say that. The conversations need to be had, but not like, "We are listening and we are not going to do anything about it". It has to be walk the walk, please, someone.

Ellie Robinson: On the point of do you think that the Government are giving enough, there is National Lottery and there is Government funding as well. It is so easy for us athletes to sit here and be like, "The Government are not giving enough, they are only accounting for 40%". I am not going to sit here and be blissfully naive to the fact that our finances and our budget is really quite constrained. The whole nation has been hit quite hard, there is a lot of businesses that need help. The NHS needs help; that is another thing. There is a lot of areas that need help, and obviously with the pandemic there is less money to distribute.

I don't want to demand that sport is put as top priority, because I don't want to say that. There needs to be sufficiency, for me. Think about where the money is going and think is that going to make an impact and not just ticking a box and saying, "We are granting X amount to this organisation, this organisation". It is the same with national governing bodies. It is thinking about where it is going, is it going to get used and is



HOUSE OF COMMONS

it efficient? Are you being efficient with where you put your money? Particularly at a time like this where finances are very strained, even more we need to see thought going into where the money is going.

Lauren Rowles: I want to add to the point you said about being employees. We are not classed as employees technically and it definitely does not feel like that. We are contractors; we are contracted. We have no rights, as we have most recently seen in recent cases. What you are given is a grant and that is completely discretionary. We can't buy homes on those, we can't get mortgages; banks will not recognise any of that.

We are completely contracted and that works the same way as we do not have the ability to then give feedback and that to be held to anybody's accountability. NGBs are not necessarily accountable for anything, or UK Sport are not accountable for things, because we are contracted. They will dispose you when they need to dispose you and you will come in and they will invest the money when they need to and it very much feels like that. We are not employees; it is not relationships. We are temporary things and we are there to do what we do, and train, and they do not really want your feedback. That is how it feels. It is not that employee/employer relationship.

Q50 **Chair:** Is that a general feeling, Lauren, that they do not want your feedback, or is that just in your particular sport?

Lauren Rowles: No, in our particular sport we want the feedback, British Rowing and ourselves. We do an annual review at the end of every year and you give your thoughts and your performance feedback to the team, and that gets sent back to my coach, which gets talked about with the team managers and the performance director, and that is all taken on board. You then have a two-hour meeting after that to discuss all of those things.

They are hearing our voices, but that is not translating when they go and have those conversations. There is an amount of pressure on our performance director and our coaches to go and have the conversations with UK Sport, and UK Sport is sitting there saying, "Well, this person didn't win a gold medal and that person came fifth, so we are going to cut their funding". They are saying, "This person has got the potential, please don't cut their funding because they might not be able to train. They might have to leave the programme because they can't sustain living because that APA is not enough." Those are the conversations that happen. UK Sport is quite clear on the boundaries and the definitions of what it is to get the funding and where that lies, and sports don't really have a say in that conversation.

Ellie Robinson: I think one thing to note as well is that if we want to be treated as employees and we want employment rights we have to be prepared to pay taxes on our funding, because at the minute I don't think our funding is taxed.

Adam Peaty: If you earn on top of that, it is all taxed.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Ellie Robinson: Yes. But for para-swimmers in particular, we have just said that we are relying on funding alone, we don't get sponsorship, we don't have outside earning. We are very lucky in the fact that even though we don't have employment, we are not classed as employees, that also means that we are not paying tax. If we are classed as employees we would have to pay tax.

Q51 **Chair:** I think, Ellie, it is less about strictly a sort of employee/employer relationship and more about a relationship. You are signed into this programme for 12 months. It is whether or not that brings a moral duty of care, the responsibility of the national governing body, and whether or not part of that moral duty of care is taking feedback over areas that you have discussed here about mental health and the lack of mental health provision within sports.

It is whether or not that is something that needs to be more than just are you performing, are you performing well? These are your metrics and that will dictate what you have in the future. That is the point I am getting at there. Rather than just a strictly sort of employee/employer relationship, it is more about a relationship.

Ellie Robinson: Yes. I am just remembering that I think there was an incident where an athlete was dropped from a programme and she wanted employment rights. There was a whole case about it and it was just that.

Adam Peaty: I think it is all about perspective though. If you get 100 athletes in this room they will all have a different opinion, and that is rightly so. It is hearing those opinions and seeing where the sport goes. We have talked about it for a very long time now, but change needs to be done. I openly say that I use a therapist but I use that through EIS that is supported by UK Sport but as a sponsor of the BOA with Bupa. Should we have to go through those channels or should there be a therapist directly accessible?

Ellie Robinson: I spoke to UK Sport recently. It said that all mental health used to go through EIS and Bupa. I think that might have just changed. I think UK Sport is now including mental health but before it all used to go through Bupa. It might have just changed recently.

Q52 **Julie Elliott:** Adam, you have been very vocal about the need for more investment in swimming. Where do you think that money should come from?

Adam Peaty: The Government. Like everything, I think Steve said it about the investment and what other areas the Government spend the money on. It is very miniscule. I am not a politician. I do not know where the money comes from—let's say it is the magic tree—but I know if you have a fitter nation, a happier nation and a valued nation saying, "We are giving you the facilities and we are going to cut the cost for you to access these facilities" that return on investment is going to be great. You can look at many case studies around the world where the government takes care of their citizens through leisure centres, access to facilities,



HOUSE OF COMMONS

accessibility to facilities as well. I think you can find the money. We always do, so I think—

Ellie Robinson: It is making sure that those facilities are affordable so that everyone is well. If you make nice shiny new facilities but the price for, say, a swim session is extortionately high, you are excluding a lot of the population.

Adam Peaty: A lot, yes.

Ellie Robinson: We need to be able to make sport accessible for all incomes, so then most of the nation is, like you say, fitter and healthier. We can try to distribute money towards sport and perhaps education as well, because that will help people in more unfortunate circumstances.

Q53 **Julie Elliott:** We are still living through this Covid pandemic—everybody is—and I am interested to know how that has impacted on all of your sports at grass-roots and elite level, particularly for facilities, funding and things like that.

Lauren Rowles: Massively. When we went into the pandemic and originally we were training for the Games—I was training twice a day in my living room, like we all were—we did not know what was going to happen. Most importantly, when it came to renewing the funding when the Games were not going ahead, we had no clue what would happen. We had no clue if they were going to have the money, UK Sport, to be able to continue our funding for another year and whether they would support that. There were a lot of questions on that at the time as athletes: what would happen with your funding?

I know during the pandemic some sports had to cut their funding and people had to go out and get jobs. Rugby Sevens are employed through England Rugby, funding streams like that where athletes had to get real jobs, go to work at Tesco or whatever it may be. That has been a very real thing for some athletes. I am fortunate enough that my previous history at the Games and who I am as an athlete has enabled them to go, “Yes, we will fund you for another year” but it has not been the case for all athletes, particularly at the grass-roots level.

There has been no participation because getting back into sport has been incredibly difficult. Getting clubs back up and running has been incredibly difficult. We are still very much feeling the effects of that on our membership, particularly. We are not translating that into indoor rowing memberships. Indoor rowing was a massive thing that people could do throughout the lockdown. Can they afford the equipment? Can they afford ergometers, rowing machines? No, they cannot. People have not been able to get into the sport because of the cost of it as well.

Adam Peaty: During Covid I remember when it was announced—obviously all those plans. I am thankful enough that I am very well supported by great sponsors and by the great stuff that I do. I did not have to worry about that, thankfully.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

I know this inquiry is about finances but Covid was extremely hard. It was extremely hard on my mental health as well because I was training for four years like lightning. I was going for it because this was my own goal. Then it was cut off overnight. When Boris announced it I was like, "The Olympics are not going ahead" in my head. Then it is that war of attrition against yourself, "How do I do another year at the same pace?"

Thankfully, I had a pool in my garden that I could train in, but that is me. I am top of my game and I have been top of my game for seven years. That is what I do. British Swimming has been incredible at dealing with that. British Swimming, especially on my side of things, adapts very well to change and that is why we were one of the most successful teams at the Olympics for team GB.

It wasn't really the worry for myself. It was a worry about what is it going to do for the next generation of Olympians? What is it going to do for the next generation of people coming through the sport? Especially with leisure centres facing crisis, there needs to be more support there, not only for elite sport, not only for swimming clubs but for everyone. It is one of those sports where you are under the water—and I am pretty sure everyone has been swimming—and you are just alone with yourself. I think that is a beautiful moment to yourself on the mental health side of things but also the physical side of things.

That is where it is trouble that some kids come to me going, "I quit during Covid because it was too hard. It was too hard to go into the Zooms with no end in sight". There were no competitions, no validation or gratification of their work.

That is where it was really hard that kids could come to me like that and I was like how do you even persuade someone to pick it back up again. Thankfully, the Olympics did that. It is, "I saw you won another gold. I saw you get on the lane rope and shout and scream. That has made me get up the next day and swim again." That is what the Olympics are for. That is what you fund. That is what the National Lottery funds, moments like that that give people hope.

Ellie Robinson: We had the lockdown. Swimming was hugely affected because if you don't have a pool you can't swim. That is unless you are a fan of open water. I can't say that I am myself. Pools were shut for a very long time. They were not receiving income for quite a while—well, they weren't receiving the income they received before. Now pools are starting to open up again and the cost of hiring a pool has gone up massively.

Swimming clubs are really struggling to afford the cost so they are putting their membership fees up. It is excluding the people who cannot afford to pay those membership fees. One family that I know at one point had three kids. They were not on a very high income and all three of their children were swimming. One of the swimmers has finished. If they were to continue now they would not be able to afford three lots of swimming fees. As well as that, I think the gas prices has also made swimming



HOUSE OF COMMONS

pools harder to run. On top of that, you then have another cost and that is being added on as well.

When swimming clubs and leisure centres hire the pools out for the general public they are putting their prices up. Again, that is excluding people on low incomes from the sport. At the grass-roots level, that will be quite a detriment because we are not sourcing the talent. We are not nurturing the talent and then, particularly in power swimming, we are trying to make athletes out of people who, frankly, are not meant to be athletes. They don't make the times and they are not cutting it. I don't mean that in an ill way but not everyone is going to make the Games. Sport is harsh and it is a difficult world to be in. Like I said, we need to make sure—again, I am not a politician so I am not sure how they are going to do it—that leisure centres are affordable for people as well.

For anyone with mobility problems or a disability or anyone elderly, swimming is non-weight bearing. It is also important for hydrotherapy as well, so for anyone with an injury. I had an injury in my hip and I was supported all the way through by the NHS and its hydrotherapy. I went to hydrotherapy for about six months. In lockdown people were not able to go. That was stopping people from going through rehabilitation and then there was added pressure on the NHS because their conditions were degenerating, so it is not only athletes but it is everyone.

Q54 John Nicolson: The three of you have given really inspiring testimony today. I can see a few of us think this and I hope all three of you consider a career in politics. You would be the most fabulous MPs. As I say, it is inspiring testimony but it sounds like quite a cruel world that you are involved in from listening to your testimony.

Your funding reduced with injury, which is entirely counterintuitive because you would think the funding would pick up with injury. If you are dealing with injury how much worse must it be to be panicking about how you are going to pay your bills. No support for mental health—we have heard that several times—or poor support for mental health, and you cannot use the funds that you get to buy a home and give yourself some stability.

It sounds like your governing bodies should be calling all three of you in urgently and asking for testimony, in the same way that we have asked for testimony, because you have some pretty clear asks. Do you agree that you need to be called in and your governing bodies need to urgently address some of these very clear requests that you have?

Lauren Rowles: If everyone goes and buys and supports the National Lottery and how that works. It is not determined by the national governing bodies necessarily. Those funding structures are completely set by you guys. Our ability to be able to do things, like buy homes and so on, is completely governed by the rules and how funding works obviously.

John Nicolson: It is unfair. You deserve to have a permanent home.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Lauren Rowles: There are pros and cons to all of it. As Ellie said, we do not pay taxes. There are pros and cons to all of it but, as athletes and how the grant structure works at the moment, there are certain restrictions on stuff like that. You are contracted and you do not necessarily have set holidays. You work whenever—and that goes for coaches as well. They work whenever we do, basically. We give our entire lives to this. It is a lifestyle. It is not just our jobs, it is a complete lifestyle change in the way we work.

Q55 **John Nicolson:** I was very uncomfortable when I heard that you had to pay homage to greedy Camelot, which milks these profits, as we have heard from Kevin. The fact that you are instructed to be obsequious to them on camera made me feel terribly uncomfortable. At the end of the day, this is funded by gambling. We know that gambling is funded by often the poorest people in society, in the poorest areas of society. You have talked about coming from poorer backgrounds yourselves. Adam, how do you feel about the fact that—and you made it clear you would like to see Government funding and I think you are right—at the moment you are funded by gambling?

Adam Peaty: Yes. It is a very good case, isn't it? We are funded by people like me, I guess, who are working.

Q56 **John Nicolson:** And Lauren's granny who really did not want to fund gambling before.

Adam Peaty: Exactly. It is hard because it is a society problem. Camelot obviously use good causes, uses the National Lottery for funding for sport as a good cause to gamble. I think that is where it is wrong. Yes, it is great that we get this funding and it is great that it goes to all these good projects and it builds and protects certain things, but there needs to be more accountability and more of a clear vision of where the money is going and the story that it is actually telling.

John Nicolson: There needs to be less gambling.

Adam Peaty: Less gambling.

Q57 **John Nicolson:** The fact that we are all told to be happy about the gambling, and there is a wee cheery thumbs up finger with a wee Winky face for the gambling and that the BBC plays along with it or has played along with a gambling show. We are orchestrated to feel cheery and happy about gambling. It is deeply unhealthy surely, Ellie.

Ellie Robinson: Yes. It is such a difficult one. If you get rid of gambling is it going to go underground? Will you always have gambling? Will it be harder to regulate? I think to have—I know it is not really a term—sustainable gambling, if gambling is going to exist, there should be more return for the good causes.

As you say, the people who gamble are very often on low incomes from the poorest areas, so I think there should be more of a return for them. I think that if you want people to gamble you want it in the safest environment possible and you want some good to come out of it as well.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

For it to work, we need to see more of a return for the people who are gambling in the first place.

- Q58 **John Nicolson:** Is it safe to say, in conclusion, that all of you really agree with Adam, which is that the nation gets a very good return for a small investment in sport and, if we are serious about sport, we should not be relying on gambling? It should be state funded and you guys should all have security, the ability to know where the money is coming from, not to be punished for injury, and the ability to buy a house without relying on gambling.

Ellie Robinson: It gets interesting when you tie sport in with the state. I think there are quite a few examples where you learn from that. Other countries give incentives like—what is in Malaysia 750—

Adam Peaty: It is Singapore, yes.

Ellie Robinson: Singapore. There is a big reward for gold medals but then, again, does that not put even more pressure on athletes to do well? I think the difference between gold medals and silver medals in America is something like—this is para-sport with world championships—125,000 and then 35,000 for a bronze.

We need to be careful because we are preaching about mental health, looking after these athletes and not putting too much pressure on them. If athletes are working towards financial incentives it could be enough to cripple them emotionally. It could be too much to handle if it is a life-changing amount of money, if people miss out and they have put so much pressure on themselves to earn that reward. I think we need to be careful.

- Q59 **John Nicolson:** I am not talking about a life-changing amount of money. I am just talking about a steady income. I don't know if you two would like to add anything before I hand back to the Chair.

Adam Peaty: From, let's say, APA it can't be a one-year contract. There is not enough stability. It needs to be three or four years. If you are making an investment in the athlete you give that value to them over a long period, so you don't see the swings inbound. You may get injured and someone else may get faster.

How do I rebound from that? How do I become more resilient? Athletes do not learn in a year. We learn every 10 years, a decade, so the more stability we have the better. That is just talking on behalf of people coming through the system now. They need stability. They need to know that they are believed in for a medium amount of time, but not long enough for them to get lazy. You do not want that. You want people given enough time to find their feet and perform at that level.

Coming back to state funding, yes, I think I do because the Government and the country reap the benefits and we represent that. We fly that flag very proudly but we cannot pay our bills with patriotism. I love putting



HOUSE OF COMMONS

our GB flag on but I am very well supported by other companies and sponsors. More needs to be done from the Government, definitely.

Ellie Robinson: I agree if it is state funded. There is a benefit in sport being state funded because we are working for the same goal and that is national glory, for the athletes as well, perhaps personal as well, personal glory. I agree with that to a certain extent, yes.

Chair: Thank you. That concludes our first panel. Lauren, Adam and Ellie, thank you very much for your evidence today. We are going to take a short adjournment of two minutes.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Anna Powell-Smith and Dr Sasha Stark.

Chair: This is the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee and our inquiry on the National Lottery. This is our second panel of witnesses. We are joined in the room today by Anna Powell-Smith, director at the Centre for Public Data, and Dr Sasha Stark, senior researcher, Responsible Gambling Council, who is joining us by Zoom from Canada. Dr Stark, thank you very much for joining us from Canada. She has frozen. We are back to that, aren't we? Anna, thank you very much for joining us in the room. We will try to get Dr Stark back very shortly. Our first questions will come from John Nicolson.

Q60 **John Nicolson:** Thank you both for joining us. I will begin with you, Dr Stark, and thank you for joining us from Canada. Do you think there is enough recognition—picking up on the evidence from the last panel of three athletes—that the Lottery is actually gambling?

Dr Stark: I would say broadly, no. Across jurisdictions, lottery generally isn't understood by most people to be a form of gambling. This goes across ages as well. This is often tied in some ways to the fact that these are provincial or national forms of gambling, and that there is a link with government and advertising is in some ways a bit different than what you see presented for other forms of gambling.

However, this provides an opportunity in some ways through recognition of state and provincial in-country lotteries as having this large platform to potentially change the view of most people on whether or not what is being promoted or participated in is a form of gambling.

Q61 **John Nicolson:** To pick up on the questions that I was asking the athletes in the previous panel, in the United Kingdom we are encouraged to think of the National Lottery as something good, something uncontroversial, something that should be promoted by the BBC on network television. We are discouraged from thinking that it is funded disproportionately by the poor, by poor areas of the country, and that it absolves the Government from the requirement to fund important areas of national life, such as sport and culture.

Dr Stark: Yes. We see that across jurisdictions. As well as here in Canada and the US, these views are shared by a lot of other jurisdictions.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

In some ways they are backed up by research and in others the results are a little less conclusive, so there are some results that show that those who are on lower incomes, lower levels of education, higher levels of unemployment play the lottery at a higher level of risk than those who are higher income, higher level of education.

Some research I have seen recently puts into question whether or not we can call lottery a kind of regressive tax on those who are in these lower socioeconomic groups. The general view of the lottery as something that is largely beneficial does permeate across countries. It is interesting to note the way that the funding tends to work, which in some cases is based on what we have seen in results in different jurisdictions of what percentage of the funds from the lottery profits go to what causes; is it going directly to things like roads, hospitals, sports and so on?

Then the other question is whether the funds are used more directly for the people on which they are having the most impacts or in the areas in which they are having the most impacts. Are the funds being directed to those groups of people, those of lower income, age, gender, who are experiencing more harm from lottery play or other forms of gambling?

Q62 John Nicolson: Can I just stop you there? In the UK, the Lottery is not used to fund roads or hospitals but it is used to fund sport and the arts. I am interested that you said there is evidence that poorer people were more likely to play the Lottery and more likely to be addicted to the Lottery. What is the evidence for that? Perhaps you could tell us what level of addiction is linked to playing the Lottery. I think a lot of people think that, for example, if you go on these online casinos or you go into a betting shop, that is addiction. Tell us about addiction linked to lottery playing.

Dr Stark: I will touch first on what that kind of harm looks like for lottery play and then link into more what the high-risk groups are. In the first instance, it is important to drive home, similar to your previous question about people not recognising lottery as a form of gambling, so bingo or scratch cards, but, also that generally people do not perceive bingo, scratch cards, lottery and a couple of other types of betting—especially those lottery scratch card forms—as a harmful form of gambling.

A lot of people do not make the connection as well that there is a level of harm associated with this form of gambling. Results show that there is a level of harm. While compared to most other forms of gambling the level of harm associated with lottery play is low, there is still a percentage of people who experience harm, so lottery play is not a benign form of gambling.

It is also important to point out that it differs, depending on the type of lottery play or type of game being played, so scratch tickets have been across studies associated with a higher level of harm than draw tickets. This is due to the nature of these games. There is quick instant results, the use of things like near wins and near misses, as well as the difficulty



HOUSE OF COMMONS

in understanding the odds in some cases for scratch cards. The risk is higher with those.

- Q63 **John Nicolson:** Presumably there is the ease of access as well. You go down to your local newsagent and they are there on the counter, so it is quite easy to find yourself spending £5, which for some families is a huge proportion of their weekly income. I notice that with the National Lottery there are different ages at which you can play. There are different ages, 16 and 18. Is there any particular evidence that those aged 16 to 18 are especially susceptible to this particular form of gambling? Is there a reason why we exclude them from some types of lottery gambling?

Dr Stark: That is a little bit different internationally. There are a lot of different jurisdictions with different game types or different by age but usually the youngest age is 18, from what I have seen. On the evidence for young people's use of these different game types, the results are a bit mixed as well. Most studies find that young people tend to play lottery and scratch cards first. That is one of the first things that they engage in. It is one of the highest levels of engagements of those who are under 24 or so in most cases.

Along with that high level of involvement, they are also more likely to experience harm with that form of gambling. If people experience harm it is most often with lottery or scratch cards—in particular with scratch cards. Parents are an interesting piece to consider here as well. There is a lot of facilitation with gambling happening among young people. As you can expect, with lottery and scratch cards, parents are buying the cards for their children. In a piece of work that we did recently, which I believe was shared with all of you, we saw that it wasn't necessarily the 16 to 17 that had the highest risk. Once we included all the other variables it was the 20 to 24. There has been a recent study in the UK asking people retrospectively what they played when they were 16 and 17.

Chair: Thank you. I think Dr Stark has just frozen there again.

- Q64 **Clive Efford:** I will move on obviously to Anna, which I was going to do anyway. Sasha has just said that there is no evidence to suggest that playing the Lottery is any more harmful than any other form of gambling, but is that true about scratch cards?

Anna Powell-Smith: I am not a gambling expert, unlike Sasha. I only know about data and tech. Most of the evidence that we have is based on surveys and I think it is fair to say that it is not of enormously high quality and there are lots of data gaps. We do not have behavioural evidence based on data, on actual largescale data, big data of what people are actually doing.

There was a study earlier this year by Oxford looking at banking data from 6 million customers. It found significant evidence of harm associated with gambling in general, all kinds of harm from financial to personal to health harms. That study did not break down lottery or scratch cards separately from other gambling. I think that is possible to do and perhaps it is something that the Gambling Commission should be looking at.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q65 Clive Efford: Does your data show, for instance, that the Lottery relies on customers who are from lower socioeconomic demographics?

Anna Powell-Smith: The Lottery and the Gambling Commission have not shared that. MPs have asked the Lottery to supply breakdowns by constituency and that has been refused multiple times on commercial grounds. I do not think that needs to be denied on commercial grounds and it is quite important to know that. The short answer is that we do not know but we could know. The Lottery will hold that data.

Q66 Clive Efford: The Lottery hold that data, but is there a way through any other route that you could find that sort of information out if the Government and the Lottery continue to consider that to be commercially confidential?

Anna Powell-Smith: The Public Health England review of gambling harms noted higher rates of problem gambling in the north-east and north-west but said the data wasn't strong enough to be sure of its significance. It might be just a kind of artefact. The other way you could do it is by looking at the largescale banking data banking data, commissioning research on that. the Gambling Commission would have to commission that itself.

Q67 Clive Efford: Thank you. Dr Stark, I don't know if you heard my first question. I heard you say earlier that there was no evidence that lotteries do any more harm than any other form of gambling, but is that true of scratch cards?

Dr Stark: Perhaps I can provide a little bit more information on the harms. I want to drive home that, although the association is weaker than other gambling forms, it is still there. They are not denying forms of gambling harm. There are a certain percentage of people who report lottery and scratch tickets as their primary reason for seeking help.

The other piece is that, although the association is weak, the number of people who play the lottery is large, so there is the overall burden. If you look at a prevention paradox, the number of people and the level of harm that is being experienced because of the lottery is quite high just because participation is high. Also, looking at those opportunities and because such high percentages of people play the lottery, including people who are experiencing harm from their play, there is an opportunity for the lottery to share safer gambling information knowing that they are in contact with people who could benefit from it.

Within that context, scratch cards have been found to be associated with a higher level of harm than draw-based cards, although still lottery and scratch are lower than a lot of other forms of gambling. Scratch cards, as I mentioned, are associated with higher harm because you can play them more frequently and you get the results much quicker. They have those defined features, so loss is disguised as wins and near misses as well as the odds issue that people have a bit of a difficulty understanding and the pay-out schedule for them.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q68 Clive Efford: Are the features of scratch cards that you describe a reason behind why they are more attractive to young people?

Dr Stark: I think so, especially the quick nature of them. Some of the results that we have seen in research, especially for young people, in signs of harm are people scratching tickets in store. This is also seen among adults. That is a sign of harm, so that instant result as well as thinking you are close to winning. Therefore, when you scratch one and then two and they are similar and you move on to the third one, those types of things are cognitively conditioning to wanting to continue to play.

Q69 Clive Efford: Do you think that we currently have the right definitions of what problem or at risk gambling is? We have frozen again.

Anna Powell-Smith: Can I come back in on something?

Clive Efford: If you can do, yes.

Anna Powell-Smith: We know from the Lottery's financial results that there is a huge growth in online instant-win games. In the past year there was a 49% growth in revenue from instant-wins, so online instant-wins. That is attributed partly to Covid but also to things like increased personalisation. We are seeing new technologies being used and greater revenues in those games in, I think, quite an alarming way.

Q70 Clive Efford: Who is participating online?

Anna Powell-Smith: We don't know. We know there has been a huge rise in the number of online players, so it has gone up to 9.7 million active online players in the Lottery now. That is 2.7 million more in the past year, so a huge growth. Again, the Lottery does not tell us how old those people are, what part of the country they are in, that sort of thing.

Q71 Clive Efford: You probably cannot comment but, when it is painted out clearly in technicolour like that by yourself, it is extraordinary that we are essentially in a huge national gambling organisation where we are not allowed to be told just exactly how it is making its money, who it is making its money from and potentially what harm is being done.

Anna Powell-Smith: Yes, I agree. John's question initially was: is the Lottery gambling? I think things have changed a lot even in the past decade. When the Lottery began, buying a paper ticket was very different from other forms of gambling.

Now you have lots and lots of online instant-win games that you can play on your app, online, and that is much more similar to other types of gambling. If you look at the kind of technology that is being used to promote these games, you have targeted advertising, personalised e-mails, machine learning being used. That is very similar to what other operators are doing and it is not clear that that distinction is being kept with the technology that is being used.

Q72 Clive Efford: Are you able to comment on whether this is becoming addictive play and, if so, what could be done to combat that?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Anna Powell-Smith: There is a lot we do not know. The Gambling Commission has told us that it is monitoring this but we don't know exactly how that is being done. Certainly it should be possible to do that by looking at data. You could look at things like affordability of play, sprees, night gambling. There are lots of indicators you could use. What we do not know is whether that is actually happening.

Q73 **Clive Efford:** Should we be concerned that potentially the Lottery disproportionately relies on problem gamblers?

Anna Powell-Smith: Given the technologies we are seeing being used, which we know increase gambling—we know that is what they are designed to do very effectively—I think we should be concerned. We should ask more questions about: what kind of harm are you looking at? How are you monitoring this? What percentage of your revenues are coming from what percentage of gamblers? Is there a small number of gamblers who are giving you a lot of revenue? I think the Lottery should be asked for that information.

Q74 **Chair:** You just said about how the Lottery does not know how young the players are that are participating online. Would it be fairly easy for it to find that out?

Anna Powell-Smith: In its privacy policy it says it stores people's date of birth, so the Lottery should know the date of birth of anybody who is registered online. Yes, it should know that.

Q75 **Chair:** Why isn't it releasing this information?

Anna Powell-Smith: It may never have been asked—I am not sure—or it may be that it is commercially confidential.

Chair: We will ask. We will write to the Lottery and ask it to release the information. It is very important that it releases this information.

Anna Powell-Smith: Yes.

Q76 **Chair:** Why do you think the Lottery has not released it? Do you think it is because basically it will be a young demographic than traditional lottery?

Anna Powell-Smith: I cannot speak to that. I do not know. It would be very interesting to look at age cohorts and what revenues are coming from different age cohorts, what types of games are being played by different age cohorts. Are younger people playing more instant-win games? Also look at affordability, so if you knows people's postcodes so you can say, "These people are based in low income areas".

Q77 **Chair:** Yes. The Lottery could potentially supply all that information to us?

Anna Powell-Smith: Based on what it says is its storing policy, yes.

Chair: Yes. Okay. Great. We are joined again by Dr Stark. Fingers crossed for your broadband. I have to say that we feel your pain here in



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliament because of broadband. We have atrocious broadband.

- Q78 **Jane Stevenson:** Thank you. Just at the wrong moment for Dr Stark, I am asking a very UK-specific question about the maximum amount that users can add to their Lottery account each week. The National Lottery website says it is £350. Your written evidence told us that spending is £750 a week. Both of those amounts sound vast to me. Where does your figure come from?

Anna Powell-Smith: That may be out of date, sorry. I have checked on the app. It is £350.

- Q79 **Jane Stevenson:** They have lowered that. Does that relate to all plays, so with the new instant games, that is every sort of game that you are playing?

Anna Powell-Smith: I believe that the maximum top-up is £350, yes.

- Q80 **Jane Stevenson:** Do we have any idea of how many users—this is again something we are going to have to request information on—would spend hundreds of pounds a week?

Anna Powell-Smith: I think we would have to ask.

Jane Stevenson: It should be easily available.

Anna Powell-Smith: Yes.

- Q81 **Jane Stevenson:** Do you have concerns with scratch cards, with those instant-win games, that that data is completely not retrievable? What data could we ask for from a point of scratch cards sales? How do we maximise our use of that data?

Anna Powell-Smith: I would expect that, yes, anything online should be recorded and should be retrievable. Point of sales data may be hard to get but anything online should be retrievable. The other limit is amount of play. I think the maximum number of times you can play instant-win games a day is 75. That is quite a lot of time playing instant games, so that might be something to ask for as well.

- Q82 **Jane Stevenson:** Do you have an opinion on those maximum levels? Do you think they are realistic or desirable or where would you put them?

Anna Powell-Smith: I think that there are two issues. There is individual affordability, so some people could afford that but few people. There is collective affordability across communities and I think we want to look at what do we know about individuals playing at those limits? Where are they based? What can we tell about their income?

I believe that Camelot has said somewhere in its reporting it uses Experian for customer profiling, so you could ask how it is using Experian to know about people's financial situation. Then collectively across communities are there high levels of spending concentrated in communities. That might be helpful.

- Q83 **Jane Stevenson:** Thank you. If I can bring in Dr Stark. Do we have any



HOUSE OF COMMONS

information on other countries' lotteries? Are there maximum play limits and do ours align with what is in place in other countries?

Dr Stark: They are seen in availability for different limits, so it is a hard question to answer because different platforms include different gaming types. For example, here in Canada, our lottery providers provide details on their casino games and things like that. The limits are a bit different so it is a little hard to say. In some cases, I have seen high possible limits in certain US states in sports spending, although the results are showing that almost no one puts in that amount of money.

It might be useful to bring up at this point, talking about limits, a recently released set of guidelines called the Lower-Risk Gambling Guidelines. They were developed by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and Addiction. It used data from five or six different countries and high quality surveys that look at people over time. It was able to come up with a set of guidelines to help people stay at the lowest level of risk. The three guidelines go together.

One is, how much? No more than 1% of household income before tax per month. Also, how often? No more than four times per months. How many are regularly playing any more than two games? This 1% piece might support the calculation of what a reasonable deposit limit would be. As has been said a couple of times, this depends on the socioeconomic status question. On the two types of games, I think it is important to pull back to where we started discussing whether or not lottery and scratch cards are viewed as game types.

This set of guidelines can be useful in supporting people who gamble at low levels of risk. Also, it is important to drive home for people what gambling types are so that they can stay within the two game types. Hopefully, that 1% household income before tax can help establish what kind of a reasonable limit to play would be.

Q84 Jane Stevenson: Do you feel that it would be reasonable for a lottery operator to have to look at the risk of different types of games as it expands its offer to people and tries to maximise profits? Where do you think that line should be?

Dr Stark: Yes, I do. I have been making this argument in the Covid-19 context where a lot of people and organisations and jurisdictions are expanding in types especially within this, knowing the socioeconomic impacts, knowing all the things we have been discussing around socioeconomic play and impacts as well. It is considering the types of games, the design features of the games that are being implemented. It is knowing which types of games tend to be associated with a higher level of risk, those with higher pay intervals, those that have shorter time periods between bets or when you bet and when you find out what you are playing, those that foster more erroneous gambling combinations, so that you are thinking you are going to win or that you are close to winning.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

I think there is an argument for limiting as much as we can or considering game design when we are implementing new programs. I know that Camelot and others use GamGard, which is a third-party organisation or tool that can measure these types of things. I definitely think that considering the impact of the games that you are going to be implementing is very useful, especially knowing the context that we are in and the types of harms that people are experiencing, the kind of gambling space that can be impacted by game design but, also, especially within the context of the National Lottery being a nationally based and for good causes type of organisation.

Q85 Jane Stevenson: Thank you very much. Finally, there is no restriction on the number of scratch cards someone can walk into a shop and purchase?

Anna Powell-Smith: Not as far as I know. I do not know, actually, sorry.

Jane Stevenson: I had not thought about it but it just went through my mind.

Q86 Kevin Brennan: When I was growing up in a working class household in Wales, my father did a 10 bob Yankee every Saturday on the horses. My mother went to Bingo every week. It was a very important part of social life for women getting out of the house and going to Bingo, and we did the Football Pools every week back in the day.

I suppose all of those are forms of gambling but I do not think that they were that harmful in the context. On the National Lottery, is there a way that we could restore the concept of perhaps doing something that could generate resources for the good causes that it is supposed to generate without contributing to an increase in gambling harm? I will ask Anna first.

Anna Powell-Smith: That may be more a question for Sasha, but I think we should be looking carefully at the percentage of revenues from traditional draw-based games. It may be part of a syndicate. It is much more social, and the percentage of revenues from instant-win games people are playing probably on their own, on the phone, around other things in their lives and the data that tells us about the journey between those two.

Perhaps people are starting by installing the app because it is easier to buy tickets than at the newsagent, then drifting towards online games and playing at higher and higher levels. Is there evidence of what was a social activity turning into something that is much more solitary, perhaps going to excess? Lotteries should have the data that tracks those journeys and I think we need to know much more about whether the Lottery is moving from one type of gambling to another.

Q87 Kevin Brennan: Sasha, what is your response to that?

Dr Stark: Definitely to echo the point about it being a social practice. I am a sociologist by training, so I definitely appreciate the social value of



gambling. Thinking back to the Low-Risk Gambling Guidelines, it is the frequency that you are doing it and the amount you are spending. On the limiting risk piece, it is using approaches like the Low-Risk Gambling Guidelines in the development of things like precommitment systems that are especially online.

You can set time limits and budget limits, whatever deposit limits, as well as the type of information that is provided to players: do they know how the games work, what the odds are, how the pay-out works; are you giving them information on what lower-risk play looks like or tips to follow for lower-risk play—as we have been discussing—as well as the games being offered?

It is limiting those that seem to be associated with a higher level of risk in research as well on the back end. As we have been discussing, Camelot and others will have that information at hand. I believe Camelot got rid of some of their higher-stake scratch cards a couple of years ago, I think for that reason. It is those type of proactive things, by looking behind the scenes on the information that is available, so that progression, like Anna was just discussing, but also the game types that are associated with the higher level of essential red flag behaviours on the back end. A multipronged approach of information, player support and back-end work in designing gameability can contribute to reducing the harms that are the result of the games that are offered.

Q88 Kevin Brennan: Looking at our National Lottery, Sasha, and perhaps your knowledge of other national lotteries and the impact of online and digital forms of gambling and of participating in those lotteries, overall do you think that the risks have increased exponentially as a result of that and have harms increased as a result of this? What is the evidence for what is happening in gambling harm in digital and national lotteries? Perhaps I could include society lotteries in that as well, if you have any knowledge of that.

Dr Stark: I don't have any specific knowledge of society lotteries, but thinking broadly about lottery, what I have seen so far, it is a little hard to separate out the impacts of expanded online play for lotteries as well as the Covid-19 situation, because a lot of those happened at the same time. We have seen a lot of people migrating online to play the lottery, especially the weekly players who didn't want to go into shops and buy tickets, so that happened. I have been seeing mixed results on what that looks like for people.

In some cases people are migrating online but they are maintaining the weekly play, just the weekly draw ticket where it is staying the same. A recent paper that I have been working on is not lottery-specific but the lottery features in the results in that we have clustered players. There were people who didn't play online over Covid-19, people who played but only the lottery and a steady level of once a week, and then people who were playing a lot of game types, who are spending a lot of time and money and who are very involved.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

That tends to echo what we have largely seen so far, again not necessarily entirely in the Covid-19 context but what that online versus offline tends to look like. It tends to be a combination of a certain percentage of people playing the same online and then a certain percentage of people experiencing a high degree of harm with online play, but usually because it is associated with other play as well, so they are playing online and offline. Again, we are getting back to that two or more types of play. Those who experience harm with online tend to be the more involved players generally, so I am thinking that might apply as well within the lottery context.

Q89 Kevin Brennan: I suppose lottery play and gambling more broadly for us as public policymakers falls under a kind of spectrum: are we prohibitionists, are we laissez-faire or are we trying to find good regulation to reduce harm? Where would each of you put yourselves? Are you prohibitionists, are you laissez-faire—I doubt that, but I will ask anyway—or is what is needed here good regulation to minimise harm? I will ask you first, Anna.

Anna Powell-Smith: I play the Lottery and I have played it for a long time. The more I have researched the use of things like targeting and advertising, the more uneasy I feel about playing it online. I think good regulation has to be the answer, but regulation needs to adapt much faster than it appears to be.

With the online gaming that is now available and the targeting personalisation that is being used that we are seeing, I think there is potential for a lot of harm to happen as people shift rapidly online. Lottery has increased its marketing substantially in the past financial year. It would be interesting to know how much of that is online marketing. We know it is using targeted advertising, so that is the potential that people are playing the Lottery online and seeing adverts targeted around their behaviour increasing in a feedback loop kind of way.

I think the regulator needs to adapt to that quite urgently and first set out some evidence and research on what advertising platforms are being used, what the impact of these is, could this lead to ads from other operators being seen, how does this fit with policies, and then tie that use of marketing quite closely to what harm we are seeing with excessive play. It needs to intervene the minute there is a feedback loop.

Dr Stark: I find myself in that regulation group as well. There is a long list of opportunities that can address a lot of the things that we have been talking about so far, again echoing the last point, of policies around timing, location and content of advertising, trying to make more clear the odds of winning and how the games work as well as limiting the high-risk features. It is also things like policies for assisting patrons or data sharing.

I know things are a little bit different in the current context for yourselves in the UK, but there is movement in the online casino sports betting



HOUSE OF COMMONS

space of willingness to engage in data sharing for research purposes. There might be opportunities to build that into regulation in opening up the back-end systems that have all of that data so we can confirm some of the things that have been largely self-reported within player data. I definitely think that there are opportunities for regulation to address some of the kind of high-risk behaviours in pockets that we have been speaking about so far.

Q90 Julie Elliott: Anna, the Government are due to publish a White Paper, supposedly later this year but we will say shortly. What do you hope to see in that White Paper?

Anna Powell-Smith: There is a question in that about the use of data. I would like to see a very substantive policy in the paper to address how data are being used by gambling operators more generally. I think it needs to focus on four real areas: making sure the regulator has the right skills in data to engage with operators at their own level and really understand what is going on; data rights, so it has to have the right powers to make operators give it the data it needs; it needs the power to take action and restrict use if necessary, if there is evidence it is causing harm; and it needs to be much more transparent and consultative about, "These are the harm metrics we are using".

Are they the right ones? How can you do it better? At the moment it is very difficult to get the information out, as we have seen. Then all of that needs to be supported by accountability for the regulator itself, so somebody to make sure it is doing those things.

Q91 Julie Elliott: Sasha, do you have anything to add?

Dr Stark: Sure. To build on that, the openness and opportunities for collaboration would be great to see built into your regulatory approach, as well as that balance between evidence informed and innovation. It is being able to mobilise the evidence we have relatively quickly to implement that for the better of the larger population and also being able to push the envelope in implementing some of these approaches that are showing promise. Support is needed to roll things out.

Q92 Julie Elliott: Thank you. If we move on the fourth National Lottery licence, are you concerned that the Gambling Commission doesn't appear to have consulted with any external gambling experts or academics or harm reduction bodies during the development of this licence? What repercussions do you think that might have, Anna?

Anna Powell-Smith: I submitted an FOI to the Gambling Commission to ask who had been consulted and it did not appear that any of those bodies you mentioned had been consulted. We don't know what is in the licence, obviously.

If the licence gives scope for harm metrics to be set during the course of the licence and if the Gambling Commission go and consult people, that is good, but I guess the problem is that we might be stuck with metrics that aren't appropriate now and aren't appropriate in the future, so that is the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

danger. We need powers in the licence to make sure those keep evolving and a very open approach to talk to experts and gambling experts about how you monitor harm in a meaningful way.

Q93 **Julie Elliott:** Sasha, do you have anything to add?

Dr Stark: Yes, to build on that, the speed of how quickly these things change is pretty fast, not necessarily in the published research field, but in other things like conferences and presentations, so there are innovations happening all the time and best practices are changing.

I think that that consultation piece is critical, especially knowing the duration of some of the licences that are being handed out, to ensure that those best practices are built in at the beginning as much as they can be, but also flexibility is included to ensure that that is maintained throughout.

Chair: Thank you. That concludes our second panel, Dr Sasha Stark and Anna Powell-Smith. Thank you very much for your evidence today.