



## Women and Equalities Committee

To senior executives at:

Adidas North Europe  
Nike UK  
Puma UK  
Umbro

By post and email

3 July 2023

### **Design and manufacture of football boots**

The Women and Equalities Committee is currently inquiring into challenges and barriers faced by female athletes. Recently we heard evidence on inequalities in sport arising from women's health and physiology. A key issue raised with us is the increased and disproportionate impact of anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injuries among female footballers.

Five of the world's top 20 (Ballon d'Or-nominated) female footballers suffered ACL injuries in 2022. England Lionesses Beth Mead and Leah Williamson have recently been side-lined by ACL injuries.

The causes of ACL injuries in women's football and their apparent disproportionate prevalence are likely to be multi-factored, with anatomical differences, the increasing intensity of the women's game, training methods, substandard playing surfaces and the impact of the menstrual cycle among areas of ongoing research.

Another factor raised with us is the design of football boots. Health and fitness experts have drawn attention to the lack of boots on the market that have been designed specifically for girls and women, leaving them with no choice but to wear boots designed principally for boys and men. We heard from football journalist Suzy Wrack about the need for more research into aspects of design that could contribute to injuries among women, for example stud length and positioning. Dr Emma Ross, a leading sports scientist, recently said:

It amazes me that there's no women's boots. Brands will advertise their boots as women's boots but only because they go down to a size three and men's



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boots don't. [...] All the science of the boots [is] completely useless when it comes to females. It is bonkers that we don't have big brands making a selection of women's boots.<sup>1</sup>

In the light of this, we are asking leading football boot brands for information on their approach to the design and manufacture of boots and what steps, if any, they are taking to research and design boots for women and girls. We would be grateful if you could answer the following questions:

1. Why are there so few football boots on the market designed specifically for women and girls?;
2. Whether you have conducted or commissioned research on the optimal design of football boots for girls and women, including to help prevent injuries and, if so, what conclusions that research came to;
3. If you have not commissioned such research, whether you have any plans to do so;
4. Whether you currently have any boots on the market designed specifically for the anatomy and physiology of girls and women and what their recommended retail price is;
5. If you do not currently have such boots on the market, whether you have any plans to design, develop and market them;
6. We are aware of several boots designed for women that cost in excess of two hundred pounds. What are the barriers to producing more affordable boots for women and girls?;
7. We are also aware that some retailers market boots in their stores as being for boys and men with no or little reference to women and girls (despite the success of the Lionesses). What steps do you take with retailers to ensure that your products are equally targeted at women and girls? If you don't take any such steps, please set out the reasons why.
8. Whether you take a different approach to other footwear, such as running shoes, for women and girls and, if so, for what reason.

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<sup>1</sup> See, "[Why are there so many ACL injuries in women's football?](#)", *90Min*, 4 May 2023



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We would be very grateful to receive your reply by 17 July 2023. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

**Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP**  
**Chair, Women and Equalities Committee**