



Department
for Culture,
Media & Sport

Rt Hon Stuart Andrew MP
Minister for Sport, Gambling and Civil
Society, and Minister for Equalities
1st Floor
100 Parliament Street
London SW1A 2BQ

E: enquiries@dcms.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/dcms

Dame Caroline Dinenage MP
Chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Select
Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

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Dear Dame Caroline,

Following my attendance at the Culture, Media and Sport Committee on Tuesday 9 January, I committed to providing further detail and action on the below:

1. A timeline for the publication of the School Sport and Action Plan non-statutory guidance
2. The composition of the upcoming Women's Football Review implementation group
3. A written letter to Meta and X to understand whether the recent abusive comments on their platforms are aligned with their terms of service
4. An update on the Digital Rights Review

Further information on these specific areas is detailed below.

1. School Sport and Activity Action Plan Non-Statutory Guidance

The Department for Education is working with sector organisations to publish new non-statutory guidance on Physical Education before the end of March 2024. The guidance will communicate a range of approaches and ideas to schools on how to deliver two hours of PE a week and equality of access to school sport for boys and girls.

2. Review of Women's Football - Implementation Group

The Government is convening an implementation group in order to hold stakeholders to account for the delivery of the Review's recommendations. The implementation group will include key decision-makers from the organisations with responsibility for taking forward the recommendations set out in the Review. These organisations are the FA, NewCo, Football Foundation, Sport England, the Sports Ground Safety Authority, the EFL, the Department for Education and the Premier League. As set out in the review, members of the group will be required to provide updates at the initial meetings in March and July on how they are addressing the recommendations.

We are also inviting a small number of independent members to join the group to provide an impartial view and challenge. We believe they will add significant value to the group given their knowledge, experience and industry insight. We will continue to keep the Committee updated as work on the implementation group is finalised and I will write to the Committee to confirm the names of the independent panellists as soon as possible. We remain committed to hosting the first implementation group meeting in March 2024.



3. Correspondence with media platforms

As discussed, in recent weeks we have seen a bombardment of abuse directed to female sports broadcasters, footballers, and other athletes, on social media platforms.

As Minister for Sport and Equalities, I am committed to creating an environment where women and girls feel safe and encouraged to be involved in sport in any capacity. I am hugely concerned about the effect that targeted online abuse could have on women and girls in sport.

I can confirm that I wrote to both Meta and X on 17 January to address my concerns and to understand whether they are aware of any such abuse towards women in sport on their services which violates their policies, and, if so, what action they have been taking to address it. I can commit to providing the Select Committee with an update should a response be received from Meta and/or X.

4. Digital Rights Review

We share the enthusiasm and appreciation shown by the Committee for the work our broadcasters do in promoting women's sport. For example, the Lionesses World Cup Final against Spain set a new UK record for the most watched women's football match as a peak audience of 14.8 million tuned in. It is also the second most-watched BBC TV event of 2023. In April 2022, we announced that the FIFA Women's World Cup and the UEFA European Women's Championship had been added to Group A of the listed events regime. This means both tournaments will remain available for free-to-air television broadcasters and to the biggest audiences.

You asked for an update on how the Media Bill will support our aims for women's sport. The Bill will ensure British audiences continue to access free live coverage of our biggest sporting moments, like the FIFA Women's World Cup and the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The Bill makes sure the qualifying criteria for the regime remains up to date and reflects the role our public service broadcasters play in delivering for UK audiences. It brings new TV-like services in scope of the regime to extend the regime's protections for live content being delivered to UK audiences over the internet. It will ensure the rights for listed events continue to be offered on fair and reasonable terms to PSBs as sport audience viewing habits evolve. These protections will also be in place for all those sports on the list, including the FIFA World Cup, for example.

You also asked for a progress update on our consideration of whether to add digital rights to the listed events regime. We are considering this issue and we plan to set out more detail in due course. Above all, it is important that we maintain the right balance between access for audiences, and the commercial freedoms that allow rightsholders to reinvest in their sport at all levels. This is a complex issue and it's important we get it right. We are therefore still considering the best way of addressing it.

Lastly, I want to reiterate our overall commitment to supporting women's sport at every opportunity – pushing for greater participation, employment, commercial opportunities and visibility in the media.

Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence as part of your inquiry into women's sport. I hope the additional information above is helpful. I am of course happy to provide more information as required.



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