



Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media & Sport

Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture,
Media and Sport
4th Floor
100 Parliament Street
London SW1A 2BQ

www.gov.uk/dcms
enquiries@dcms.gov.uk

Julian Knight MP
Chair
DCMS Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A OAA

SC1020/DC
26th October 2020

Dear Julian,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in front of the Committee on 14th October. During the session, I committed to write to you and other Committee members on a number of matters.

I will take the commitments in turn:

Women in Sport free to air events

Julie Elliott asked regarding the status of listed free-to-air review with regard to women's sports. The listed events regime seeks to strike a balance between retaining free-to-air sporting events for the public while allowing rights holders to negotiate agreements in the best interests of their sport. The government recognises that more can be done to improve the diversity of the listed events regime and to support the broadcasting of disability and women's sport. We have added the Paralympic Games to the list, recognising that it is an event of 'special national significance' on par with the Olympic Games. We have also consulted on the addition of the women's equivalent of men's events already on the list. We are considering the responses received to this consultation, and we will respond to the consultation and set out our decision in due course.

I would like to reiterate our commitment to promoting women's sport and building on the fantastic progress seen over recent years. 2019 in particular was a fantastic year for women's sport, with standout events like the Fifa Women's World Cup in France and the Netball World Cup in Liverpool shining a spotlight on our brilliant women sports stars. We want events like these to inspire increased participation in sport and physical activity, particularly for women and girls.

Women in Football gender discrimination

Furthermore, Julie Elliot asked for an update following Women in Football's recent survey of their members. I am thankful to her for bringing this to my attention, and I have read the results with great interest. The survey reported that two-thirds of women working in football had experienced gender discrimination in the workplace. In addition, the survey highlighted that many felt concerns were "brushed under the carpet".

There is no place for any kind of discrimination in sport. All sports have a responsibility to make sure that everyone taking part, whether employees, amateur players or volunteers, feel welcome, safe and valued. I welcome the actions of Women in Football to develop a new corporate membership scheme to support employers in becoming more gender inclusive.

The government sport strategy sets out our commitment to getting more women and girls active, and in increasing diversity in the sporting workforce. It is important to ensure that sport is a positive experience for everyone involved, whether taking part at the professional or the grassroots level.

We have seen good progress since our strategy was published - women now make up an average of 40% of board members across Sport England and UK Sport funded bodies, and initiatives such as Sport England's This Girl Can campaign have proved successful at inspiring millions of women and girls to get active. We want to build on this positive progress to ensure sport is inclusive and welcoming to its spectators, participants and workforce at all levels.

Video Games

Damien Hinds asked me to consider the article in the Daily Telegraph on October 13th on problem gaming, and whether DCMS is working with DHSC on responses to tackle this. The government takes concerns over potential harms from video games seriously, including issues such as those outlined in the Telegraph article. While over half the UK population plays games - the vast majority engaging safely - it is important that any negative impacts are understood and addressed.

My officials work closely with DHSC and will be discussing the points raised in the article. In the Government's response to the DCMS Select Committee Immersive and Addictive Technologies Inquiry report, we also outlined plans to create a new video games research framework to fully understand the impact video games have on individuals. The aim is to determine the full range and detail of the questions that need to be addressed on video games, creating a strong and consistent evidence base from which good quality research can develop to inform future actions.

This work will commence in the next couple of months and will be led by DCMS' Chief Scientific Advisor. My officials will also be engaging with DHSC on this work. While the areas to address will be determined during the creation of the framework, I fully expect it to include issues around excessive play of games.

Social Media abuse

Finally, Alex Davies-Jones asked for an update on the timescales of our engagement with the Home Office and social media companies, specifically regarding content on social media platforms that glorify domestic and/or sexual violence.

Ministers and officials in DCMS have regular meetings and discussions with social media platforms on a range of issues, including online abuse and disinformation, on which my engagement is informed by weekly reporting I receive from the cross-Whitehall Counter Disinformation Unit. I also meet with the Home Secretary on a regular basis to discuss details of our online harms agenda and how legislation will address online abuse. Our most recent meeting took place on 29th September. The Minister for Digital and Culture previously held discussions with the Security Minister on 10th September. In addition to this, officials met with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's office on 7th October to discuss domestic abuse and online harms. Details of Ministerial meetings are published quarterly on the Gov.uk website.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Oliver Dowden', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

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