



House of Commons
Digital, Culture, Media and
Sport Committee

Racism in cricket

Seventh Report of Session 2021–22

*Report, together with formal minutes relating
to the Report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed 11 January 2022*

The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and its associated public bodies.

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Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No. 152. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publication

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Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Keely Bishop (Committee Operations Assistant), Andy Boyd (Committee Operations Manager), Laura Caccia (Second Clerk), Dr Conor Durham (Committee Specialist), Lois Jeary (Committee Specialist), Dr Stephen McGinness (Clerk), Anne Peacock (Senior Media and Communications Officer) and Billy Roberts (Media & Communications Officer).

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You can follow the Committee on Twitter using [@CommonsDCMS](https://twitter.com/CommonsDCMS).

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Racism in cricket

1. An article in Wisden in August 2020 saw Azeem Rafiq reveal that he had experienced racial discrimination during his time at Yorkshire County Cricket Club:

I've been in dressing rooms where things have been said, and, really, I should have stopped it. I had a captain who was openly racist. [...] There's one comment that stands out for me. And I remember it to this day. It was around the time of my debut. There was me, Adil Rashid, Ajmal Shahzad and Rana Naved-ul-Hasan. We're walking onto the field and one player said: 'There's too many of you lot. We need to have a word about that'.¹

That was followed by an article by ESPNcricinfo where Azeem Rafiq said that he had considered taking his own life:

"I want the authorities to wake up," he says. "I want them to stop looking at the issue of race as a PR activity or a marketing activity. I want them to really engage and listen and change. Someone is going to be tipped over the edge if we're not careful".²

Yorkshire County Cricket Club announced an inquiry into these allegations.³ That inquiry took almost a year and a statement by the club on 19 September 2021 said:

There were many allegations made against the Club most of which relate to a period more than ten years ago. Many of the allegations were not upheld and for others there was insufficient evidence for the Panel to make a determination. It is right, however, to acknowledge from the outset that several of the allegations made by Azeem were upheld and that sadly, historically, Azeem was the victim of inappropriate behaviour. This is clearly unacceptable. We would like to express our profound apologies for this.⁴

We called on Yorkshire County Cricket Club to publish the report in full⁵ but were told that it was not possible due to issues of privacy and potential defamation and, instead, the club published a summary of the report.⁶

2. We were astonished when, on 28 October, the Club then announced:

The Club has also carried out their own internal investigation following the findings in the Report after which they are able to report that they have come to the conclusion that there is no conduct or action taken by any of its employees, players or Executives that warrants disciplinary action.⁷

1 Wisden, "[The extraordinary life of Azeem Rafiq](#)" 17 August 2020

2 ESPNcricinfo, "[Azeem Rafiq was 'on brink of suicide' after experiencing racism at Yorkshire](#)", 2 September 2020

3 Yorkshire County Cricket Club, "[Statement by Roger Hutton, Chair of Yorkshire County Cricket Club](#)", 3 September 2020

4 Yorkshire County Cricket Club, "[Club Statement](#)", 19 August 2021

5 DCMS Committee Press Release, "[DCMS Committee calls for Yorkshire County Cricket Club to publish report into allegations of racism](#)", 8 September 2021

6 Yorkshire County Cricket Club "[Statement from Chair, Summary of Panel's Report & Recommendations](#)", 10 September 2021

7 Yorkshire County Cricket Club, "[Club statement](#)", 28 October 2021

It was inconceivable to us that, despite upholding claims of racial discrimination, the Club offered nothing more than heartfelt apologies. We concluded that there was no option but to invite Azeem Rafiq, Yorkshire County Cricket Club and the England and Wales Cricket Board to speak directly to us on 16 November.⁸ It was apparent that governance within the sport had failed in some fundamental manner.

3. We invited the Chair, the Chief Executive and the Director of Medical Services of Yorkshire County Cricket Club but, in the two weeks between the invitation and the session, the Chair, Roger Hutton, resigned and the Chief Executive, Martyn Moxon, was signed off for health reasons. While Roger Hutton agreed to attend despite his resignation, Yorkshire County Cricket Club were unable to offer anyone to speak to us. Events were also moving at a rapid pace. The England and Wales Cricket Board suspended Yorkshire's ability to host international or major matches until it had "clearly demonstrated that it can meet the standards expected of an international venue, ECB member and First Class County".⁹ It also instigated a review of the Club's governance. There were numerous press reports of cricketers describing their experience of racism in cricket,¹⁰ apologising for their actions in this regard,¹¹ or denying that they were part of the problem.¹² Sponsors were also reported to have withdrawn support from Yorkshire County Cricket Club.¹³ At Yorkshire, Lord Patel had been appointed as the new Chair and had, in his first few days, settled the employment tribunal with Azeem Rafiq, established a whistleblowing hotline and begun making change at the Club.¹⁴

4. At our oral evidence session, we were convinced by Azeem Rafiq's moving evidence of how he had been subject to racial discrimination and his conviction that this was not simply a personal issue but an endemic problem across the whole of cricket. We had concerns about the lack of coordinated action between Yorkshire County Cricket Club and the England and Wales Cricket Board.

5. The existence of the South Asian Action Plan shows that the game was aware of an issue and our evidence from both Azeem Rafiq and the Quaid E Azam Premier League indicates that anyone involved in cricket should have been aware of the underlying racism throughout the game. The language used in correspondence received by members of our Committee subsequent to the evidence session with Azeem Rafiq, and the manner in which stories were run in the press to discredit Azeem,¹⁵ further establish, to us, that eradicating racism from the game will be a long and difficult road. It does not matter if a whistle-blower is of perfect moral character but whether the issue raised is valid. **It is evident to us that there is a deep-seated issue of racism in cricket. More pertinent, it is evident to Yorkshire County Cricket Club and the England and Wales Cricket Board that there is an issue of racism in cricket.**

8 DCMS Committee Press release, "[Announcement: DCMS Committee to call in Yorkshire County Cricket Club Chair on Azeem Rafiq report](#)", 2 November 2021

9 ECB Press Notice, "[ECB Board statement on Yorkshire County Cricket Club](#)", 4 November 2021

10 For example, ITV News, "[Rana Naved-ul-Hasan tells ITV News he witnessed 'Michael Vaughan racism'](#)", 5 November 2021

11 For example, Sky News "[Yorkshire cricket racism: Ex-England cricketer Gary Ballance admits using racial slur against teammate Azeem Rafiq](#)", 4 November 2021

12 For example, BBC News, "[Michael Vaughan denies making racist comment to Asian players](#)", 5 November 2021

13 For example, BBC News, "[Azeem Rafiq: Nike and other leading sponsors cut ties with Yorkshire County Cricket Club](#)", 4 November 2021

14 Yorkshire County Cricket Club, "[Statement from Chair Lord Kamlesh Patel OBE](#)", 8 November 2021

15 For example, Spectator, "[Azeem Rafiq and the hypocrisy of victimhood](#)", 19 November 2021

6. In the weeks after our evidence session, Yorkshire County Cricket Club announced an independent review of its governance¹⁶ and substantial change in its administrative and coaching staff¹⁷ and the ECB launched a new plan to address racism in cricket.¹⁸ We also had the Sports Minister, Nigel Huddleston, indicate the Government's determination to ensure the issue was managed. In a letter to us, he said:

... given the gravity of the allegations and concerns about the pervasiveness of discrimination in cricket more widely, the Government will be monitoring the ECB's progress and leadership in this matter closely, and is prepared to take action where needed.

[...]

At the Committee hearing I was also asked about the potential for a new independent regulator for cricket. This would require careful consideration, and I believe that sports should be given every opportunity to run their own affairs wherever possible. However, if other actions do not result in meaningful change it remains an option that I will consider as part of a range of wider options around governance and regulation.¹⁹

7. We, like the Minister, are watching closely and fully intend to ensure that cricket cleans up its act. We recommend that the Government ensures that any future public funds for cricket are dependent on continuous, demonstrable progress in getting rid of racism in both the dressing rooms and on the stands. We recommend that the England and Wales Cricket Board develop a set of key indicators by which they might measure their progress and then report to us on those indicators every quarter. We will invite Yorkshire County Cricket Club and the ECB to give evidence on their progress early in 2022.

16 Yorkshire County Cricket Club, "[Update from Yorkshire County Cricket Club - 2 Dec](#)", 2 December 2021

17 Yorkshire County Cricket Club, "[Update from Yorkshire County Cricket Club - 3 Dec](#)", 3 December 2021

18 England and Wales Cricket Board, "[Cricket commits to action plan to tackle racism and all forms of discrimination](#)", 26 November 2021

19 Correspondence from the Minister for Sport, Tourism, Heritage and Civil Society, 14 December 2021

Formal minutes

Tuesday 11 January 2022

Members present:

Julian Knight, in the Chair

Kevin Brennan

Clive Efford

Julie Elliott

Rt Hon Damian Green

Simon Jupp

John Nicolson

Jane Stevenson

Giles Watling

Draft Report (*Racism in cricket*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 7 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Seventh Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No.134.

Adjournment

Adjourned till Tuesday 18 January 2022 at 9.30 am.

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence in the Committee's '[Sport governance](#)' series of evidence sessions (HC 855). Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Tuesday 16 November 2021

Azeem Rafiq, former Yorkshire cricketer [Q1–69](#)

Roger Hutton, former Chair, Yorkshire County Cricket Club; **The Lord Patel of Bradford OBE**, Chair, Yorkshire County Cricket Club [Q70–150](#)

Tom Harrison, Chief Executive, England and Wales Cricket Board; **Kate Miller**, Chief Diversity and Communications Officer, England and Wales Cricket Board; **Meena Botros**, Director of Legal and Integrity, England and Wales Cricket Board; **Alan Dickinson**, Non-Executive Director, England and Wales Cricket Board [Q151–212](#)

Tuesday 7 December 2021

Basharat Hussain, Executive Chairperson, Quaid e Azam Premier Cricket League; **Adil Mehmood**, Executive Finance Officer, Quaid e Azam Premier Cricket League [Q213–295](#)

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Session 2021–22

Number	Title	Reference
1st	The future of UK music festivals	HC 49
2nd	Pre-appointment hearing for Information Commissioner	HC 260
3rd	Concussion in sport	HC 46
4th	Sport in our communities	HC 45
5th	Pre-appointment hearing for Information Commissioner	HC 260
6th	Pre-appointment hearing for Chair of the Charity Commission	HC 261
1st Special	The future of public service broadcasting: Government Response to Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2019–21	HC 273
2nd Special	Economics of music streaming: Government and Competition and Markets Authority Responses to Committee's Second Report	HC 719
3rd Special	Sport in our communities: Government Response to Committee's Fourth Report	HC 761

Session 2019–21

Number	Title	Reference
1st	The Covid-19 crisis and charities	HC 281
2nd	Misinformation in the COVID-19 Infodemic	HC 234
3rd	Impact of COVID-19 on DCMS sectors: First Report	HC 291
4th	Broadband and the road to 5G	HC 153
5th	Pre-appointment hearing for Chair of the BBC	HC 1119
6th	The future of public service broadcasting	HC 156
1st Special Report	BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2018–19: TV licences for over 75s Government and the BBC's Responses to the Committee's Sixteenth Report of Session 2017–19	HC 98
2nd Special Report	The Covid-19 crisis and charities: Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2019–21	HC 438
3rd Special Report	Impact of Covid-19 on DCMS sectors: First Report: Government Response to Committee's Third Report of Session 2019–21	HC 885

Number	Title	Reference
4th Special Report	Misinformation in the COVID-19 Infodemic: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report	HC 894