

Written evidence submitted by England Boxing and the British Boxing Board of Control

1. About England Boxing

England Boxing is the National Governing Body and Custodian of Boxing in England, overseeing more than 1000 affiliated clubs and 27,000 members, along with 150,000 recreational members across England. We oversee the safety and welfare of members, child protection and compliance, coaching courses, DBS checking, and promote the benefits of boxing to potential new members, enforcing rules and regulations and providing a talent pathway for boxers who excel. We also organise and administer national and regional competitions for Elite, Youth, Junior, Schools, and Development Boxers, as well as an annual Three Nations tournament and a female-only Box Cup.

2. About the British Boxing Board of Control

The British Boxing Board of Control has been the Custodian of professional boxing in the United Kingdom since 1929 (incorporated as a Limited Liability Company in 1989) and is responsible for the development of best practice in professional boxing including: innovative regulation, ensuring the United Kingdom is a global leader in health and safety and the medical protection of professional boxers; effective arbitration and disciplinary enforcement, appointment of referees and timekeepers, licensing of all professional boxers, managers, coaches and promoters; and the effective representation of professional British boxing on the global stage.

3. Our responses to selected inquiry questions

What should other sports be learning from the growth of women's football leagues in the UK?

There is an appetite for women to get involved with sport, but it does require adequate investment, visibility, and environments for women to feel safe and comfortable to participate. The ability for other sports to use national and international successes, as well as the recent increase in publicity for equality within women's football is something that other sports can take specific learnings from - but these need to be captured and presented to National Governing Bodies (NGB's) and sporting organisations in a way that is practical, specific, and actionable at grassroots level.

What is needed for women's sporting organisations to grow audiences and revenues?

Further investment into this specific area within disadvantaged communities is key - more investment into childcare support for disadvantaged and under-represented women and incentives for girls to remain physically active will help, but also further investment into more community engagement events, competitions, female-role models, female-friendly venues, this will all lead to reaching a wider audience.

Women are also often in charge of households and children, meaning that any physical activity has to work around them at particular times that are convenient in relation to the school run or pre-school commitments. Specific funding to support women to care for children and create time for exercise is important.

It's also vital that the number of registered female coaches, referees, and officials are increased as having a woman coach, referee and official as the key point of contact will put new female starters at ease about joining sessions and help to grow participation, audiences, and revenues.

Furthermore, having more female coaches, referees and trainers in boxing clubs teaching, training, and refereeing will help female boxers feel more confident and comfortable. We suggest that the Government could provide specific funding for new full-time female coaches and referees to support and enhance training and referring for female boxers and bouts across the Home Nations.

It's also vital that appropriate female-only changing rooms, toilets, designated spaces, and equipment (including head and chest guards) are made available as this will significantly help to drive up participation and awareness amongst women and girls. We suggest that the Government consider allocating specific funding for new equipment and inclusion officers to coordinate activities and ensure that boxing clubs can provide and offer the correct equipment and facilities for all women boxers in the United Kingdom.

Furthermore, we encourage boxing clubs to wherever possible be very active on social media to build profile and awareness of female boxing successes and achievements to broaden their reach and demonstrate in multiple posts how many women and girls are training in their clubs on a regular basis. Such activities highlight boxing as an inclusive environment for all and drive participation and grow audiences.

What action is needed to tackle sexism and misogyny in sport?

Education is required in a broad range of formats to reach all areas of society, from grassroots to professional level. Again, specific support around funding for education, events, showcases and regular conversations on this subject at all levels in sport will help to tackle it head-on, as well as a public zero-tolerance approach to sexism and misogyny.

As the NGB's for boxing, we would be happy to work with the Government to develop a "women in boxing" trailblazer programme for schools delivering a structured schools engagement programme to tackle sexism and misogyny in sport and increase participation by showcasing boxing as a genuine career opportunity for girls.

The programme would encourage current and former female professional boxers to deliver motivational talks to girls at local schools about the benefits of boxing including: non-contact sessions, self-defence classes, and developing a professional career in the sport as a boxer, referee, manager, coach or administrator; and would connect girls with local amateur boxing clubs in their area to help increase participation, improve health and well-being outcomes, build awareness about future career opportunities and tackle sexism and misogyny in sport.

4. Further information

England Boxing and the British Boxing Board of Control are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry and would welcome to the opportunity to give further oral evidence.