

Conservatives for Women – Written evidence (NPS0068)

Conservatives for Women are Conservative Party members and supporters. We campaign within the public sphere, and in the heart of Westminster, to raise awareness of issues which threaten the safety and dignity of women. We defend science, reason, free speech, and the need for the open tolerant debate that underpins our society.

<https://conservativesforwomen.org>

We speak on behalf of over 1000 women who signed our pledge:

<https://www.ipetitions.com/petition/conservative-womens-pledge>

We have answered (some, not all) of the questions provided as underlined.

QUESTIONS

1. How can local delivery, including funding structures, of sport and recreation be improved to ensure that people of all ages and abilities are able to lead an active lifestyle? For example, how successfully do local authorities and other bodies such as Active Partnerships, Leisure Trusts, local sports clubs and charities work together, and how might coordination be improved?

1.1 We recommend a central register, a website that contains links to all sporting facilities, clubs, and programmes, easily searchable by postcode, type of activity, and age ranges, just for example.

1.2 Many people find it difficult to find sporting opportunities, particularly those run by voluntary groups, as there is no central register. If you want to take part in a particular sport, then a search engine can find links in your area, but if you just want to get more active, and aren't sure what you might want to do, then a central register would be immensely helpful.

2. How can children and young people be encouraged to participate in sport and recreation both at school and outside school, and lead an active lifestyle? If possible, share examples of success stories and good practice, and challenges faced.

2.1 Role models are incredibly important. A number of our members report being particularly inspired to take up a sport after seeing something in the media or attending an event. This is why it is particularly important that female sport should receive far more media coverage than it currently does.

2.2 Dr Packer, a senior clinical lecturer in public health says: "Despite the success of our female athletes both at the 2012 games and since, women's sport, at least in the eyes of the print media we studied, remains a minority sport. Until we change this perception, the levels of participation of girls and women in sport will continue to suffer, as will public health as a result."

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/womens-blog/2014/mar/13/womens->

[sport-newspaper-coverage-birmingham-university](#)

3. How can adults of all ages and backgrounds, particularly those from under-represented groups, including women and girls, ethnic minorities, disabled people, older people, and those from less affluent backgrounds, be encouraged to lead more active lifestyles? If possible, share examples of success stories and good practice, and challenges faced.

3.1 We will answer this question from the point of view of women and girls, in particular with reference to how single-sex spaces and sports are important for women and girls, for their privacy, dignity, and safety.

3.2 Maya Forstater conducted a survey in the summer of 2020, asking women about the replacement of the category 'sex' with 'gender identity': sport was frequently mentioned.

"I want sports to be fair; I want young female athletes to benefit from them the same way I did, and I want elite female athletes I look up to to have the wins they deserve."

"Self ID worries me immensely because it feeds in the idea that the physical reality of sex no longer matters and could lead to exclusion of women from work and sports especially in minority communities. In a word it is not progress."

"Both my daughters play sport to a high level and I see the strength, resilience and confidence this gives them. I don't want female sport ruined by having to compete against men."

"Women's sports exist to provide a level playing field and allowing trans women to compete with women distorts this level playing field. It will have a negative impact on the careers and livelihoods of women athletes which is already underfunded and under resourced compared to men's sports."

<https://gender-dissidents.net/tag/sports/>

3.3 We also believe knowing they are able to escape the 'male gaze' would encourage many more women and girls to participate in physical exercise.

3.4 Women and girls have been bombarded with images of 'desirable' female beauty for decades. The advent of social media has only made this worse, with many girls (and women) feeling under immense pressure to conform to particular standards.

3.5 For girls, particularly as they advance through puberty, getting hot, sweaty, and dishevelled is not appealing; they feel they have to maintain an image. "It is also estimated that 70% of adolescent girls and 45% of adolescent boys want to change their body weight or shape."

<https://equalities.blog.gov.uk/2019/07/26/government-engaging-with-body-image-influencers-crucial-to-challenging-negative-body-image/>

3.6 For others, it is the attention that men and boys pay to them; this is usually completely unwanted and very intimidating.

46% of female runners in the UK say they have been harassed while running:
<https://www.runnersworld.com/uk/training/a775643/running-while-female/>

3.7 The provision of female only running clubs, gyms, swimming sessions, for example, allows women and girls to exercise in an environment that is free from harassment of this type, and can encourage participation. Female only activities provide privacy and dignity to women and girls, and may be particularly important for women of faith.

3.8 Hampstead ponds now allow men who 'identify as women' to use the ladies' pond. There is both a male only pond and a mixed pond they could use. A consultation was carried out but numerous responses against the change were simply discarded.
<https://threadreaderapp.com/thread/1130973355849461765.html>

3.9 "One Muslim woman said she would no longer be able to use the pool if transgender women {for clarity, 'transgender women' are men who 'identify as' women. The vast majority have had no hormonal or surgical changes made to their bodies, see 1.} were allowed in. "She said: "My nieces are not allowed to be uncovered around men and will not be able to learn to swim, Muslim girls are put at risk and discriminated against by this change."
<https://talkradio.co.uk/news/hampstead-heath-ladies-pond-opens-transgender-swimmers-19052331102>

3.10 Why do we segregate the vast majority of sports by sex? It is obvious; boys and men, as a class, have physical advantages over girls and women as a class.
The website <http://boysvswomen.com/#/> illustrates this clearly.

3.11 If females were not allowed a separate sex category then males would dominate in almost every sport.
Female only sport allows women and girls to show the very best of what the female body is capable of. Our greatest sportswomen would be a mere footnote in any sporting history. We would have no role models, no achievements to aspire to.

3.12 It isn't just about winning; safety is also an important consideration. The recent decision by World Rugby to maintain elite women's rugby only for natal women looked at the research, and their conclusion was that allowing men who identify as women to play on women's teams was unsafe.
They received accusations of 'transphobia' over this.

3.13 "In a statement, World Rugby said the review concluded "safety and fairness cannot presently be assured for women competing against transwomen in contact rugby"."
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/rugby-union/54484287>

3.14 Many sports have been relying on a belief that if a man who identifies as a

woman lowers his testosterone levels enough (usually to a level still much higher than that of a woman) then this is enough to mitigate any physical advantages. This does not hold true.

We recommend the committee read the evidence presented on the Fair Play for Women website:

<https://fairplayforwomen.com/campaigns/sports-campaign/>

3.15 We believe it is crucial that most sports continue to be segregated by sex. Girls will not be encouraged to participate if they know they will always be beaten by a boy, however he may identify, or if they are in more danger of being injured due to coming up against male bodies in physically tough sports like rugby.

3.16 As Dr Emma Hilton, a developmental biologist says "Female sport exists to celebrate the achievements of extraordinary females, not those of ordinary males".

We recommend viewing the speech given by Dr Hilton at the WPUK/FairPlay meeting in July 2019:

https://fairplayforwomen.com/emma_hilton/

{1} <https://fairplayforwomen.com/penis/>

4. Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation, the Government's 2015 sports strategy, outlines five outcome priorities: physical health, mental health, individual development, social and community development and economic development. Are these the right priorities and how successful has the government been in measuring and delivering these outcomes to date?

5. Is government capturing an accurate picture of how people participate in sport and recreation activities in its data collection? How could this be improved?

5.1 All data should be clearly captured, with sex being a key characteristic. If we cannot see sex, we cannot see sexism nor tackle sex discrimination.

6. How can racism, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny and ableism in sport be tackled?

6.1 There should be a zero tolerance approach to racism, homophobia, misogyny and ableism, all of which are clearly defined.

6.2 Whilst we support the rights of people who identify as 'transgender' to live free from harassment and abuse, we feel we must point out that acknowledging biology is often called 'transphobic', as is supporting and fighting for the rights of women to single-sex sports and spaces. We must not allow women's voices to be silenced on these issues due to accusations of 'transphobia'.

7. What can be done to improve and implement effective duty of care and

safeguarding standards for sports and recreation activities at all levels?

7.1 Safeguarding must be at the heart of every policy. Safeguarding cannot be implemented if we are unable to speak the truth about sex.

7.2 In particular, children should not be forced to share private spaces, like changing rooms, with a member of the opposite sex, for reasons of privacy and dignity. It is essential that people feel their personal boundaries are respected, and the Equality Act 2010 is very clear; single-sex spaces are a proportional response to a legitimate aim where 'the circumstances are such that a person of one sex might reasonably object to the presence of a person of the opposite sex.'

Section 27, 7b

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/schedule/3/part/7/crossheading/singlesex-services>

7.3 Safe Schools Alliance UK have produced an excellent document highlighting safeguarding 'red flags'.

<https://safeschoolsallianceuk.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/redflagsa4.pdf>

8. What are the opportunities and challenges facing elite sports in the UK and what can be done to make national sports governing bodies more accountable? For example, accountability for representing and protecting their membership, promoting their sport and maximising participation.

8.1 One challenge facing elite sport is the pressure by lobby groups to allow participation by 'gender' rather than sex. Again, the Equality Act 2010 is very clear "A gender (sic)-affected activity is a sport, game or other activity of a competitive nature in circumstances in which the physical strength, stamina or physique of average persons of one sex would put them at a disadvantage compared to average persons of the other sex as competitors in events involving the activity."

Section 195, 3

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/195>

8.2 We are very clear that sporting organisations should not be pressured by lobby groups to allow males to compete in female sports and competitions. We recommend the EHRC issue clear guidance on this issue.

9. What successful policy interventions have other countries used to encourage people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to participate in sport and recreation, and lead more active lifestyles?

10. Should there be a national plan for sport and recreation? Why/why not?

29 January 2021