

Kick It Out – Written evidence (NPS0126)

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Kick It Out is English football's equality and inclusion organisation. Founded as the "Let's Kick Racism Out of Football" campaign in 1993, its remit quickly expanded to other forms of discrimination. Kick It Out is now a charity that serves under-represented and minority communities in football from elite to grassroots and community level. Our ambition is to make football a game where everyone feels that they belong and to eliminate discrimination. We tackle discrimination and champion inclusion through programmes around three pillars:

1. Campaigning and Reporting: we work with government, governing bodies and others to campaign for change on issues of public policy such as online hate and setting representation targets in football boardrooms. We also create transparency reports to evidence challenges and approaches (for example with our annual discrimination report).
2. Guidance and Education: we work with clubs, young players, off-field professionals and offenders providing suitable education on discrimination and inclusion.
3. Talent: we work with the football industry to create talent pathways for under-represented or minority communities to get into the game

Given the remit of our organisation, we are responding only to Question 6. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these issues in further detail, perhaps together with some of our colleagues at the Football Association or elsewhere from the football community.

www.kickitout.org

Questions

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

In our experience, the biggest challenge in this area is the lack of holistic and integrated design thinking reflecting the fragmented governance of sports. There are many individual initiatives and often these are reactive to external events so, across sport, this results in fragmented approaches. For example, look at the sheer number of anti-racist messages and initiatives across football from clubs to charities to leagues. There is a similar plethora of messages and approaches across other strands of inclusion/protected characteristics. As part of my strategic review of Kick it Out, I met over 250 stakeholders across football including clubs of many sizes from elite to grassroots level. One common theme was around the fragmentation of message and approach and this created a feeling of campaign fatigue and ennui at some clubs. This was partly the reason why Kick it Out created its *Take A Stand* campaign with Facebook so that, by design, it could potentially act as an umbrella to straddle different strands of inclusion and tackling discrimination whilst seeking to convert bystanders into activists and engage them in solutions. This is at very early stages of activation.

We suggest that the problem needs to be looked at through two lenses each of which has two contrasting dimensions, effectively creating a connected 4 box strategy:

- Elite v. grassroots
- Tackling discrimination v. Promoting inclusion

There are connections between each but the challenges are subtly different. For example:

- typically if there is an act of discrimination at elite level, there is a lot of evidence available to be used to support enforcement action (eg from CCTV, fans, stewards, TV cameras etc). At grassroots, the absence of independent evidence is a significant challenge. At elite level, the number and frequency of incidents is, in comparative terms, relatively few and far between but the profile of each incident is high with intense media scrutiny. By comparison, incidents of exclusion and discrimination at grassroots is, anecdotally a weekly and frequent occurrence across the country but it gains little public attention and focus. The attention and scrutiny is in inverse proportion to the scale of the problems which impacts the allocation of resources when that allocation is sensitive to the amount of negative public attention.
- Solutions to tackling key discrimination challenges (eg an Online Safety Act to regulate social media platforms to tackle online hate) will not directly impact systemic inclusion challenges (how to get more black players graduating into coaching or more Asians on the pitch). Conversely, a solution to tackle systemic under-representation (eg progressive recruitment targets and differential investments in under-represented or minority talent) will not have a direct immediate impact on someone shouting abuse from the stands. We need both sets of solutions pursued in parallel to create the sense of belonging that is necessary to inspire under-represented or minority communities to feel that they are able to participate in or engage with sport. In combination and over time, these can potentially create cultural change.

We would welcome the opportunity to have a more in-depth conversation on this aspect of the broader challenge that the Committee is addressing.

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