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Culture, Media and Sport
Committee

Women and Sport

First Report of Session 2014–15

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

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The Culture, Media and Sport Committee

The Culture, Media and Sport Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for 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

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the internet at www.parliament.uk/cmscom. A list of Reports of the Committee in the present Parliament is at the back of this volume.

The Reports of the Committee, the formal minutes relating to that report, oral evidence taken and some of the written evidence are available in a printed volume.

Additional written evidence is published on the internet only.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Elizabeth Flood (Clerk), Grahame Danby (Second Clerk), Kevin Candy (Inquiry Manager), Hannah Wentworth (Senior Committee Assistant), Keely Bishop (Committee Assistant) and Jessica Bridges-Palmer (Media Officer).

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Contents

Report	<i>Page</i>
1 Introduction	3
Background	4
Reasons for the participation gap	6
2 Attracting new participants	8
Types of sport on offer	9
Sport at school	10
Options after school	15
Availability of facilities	19
Cost and location of facilities	19
Suitability of facilities	21
Equal access to facilities	23
Alternative ways of providing facilities	23
3 Inspiring women	25
Women's sport and the media	25
The potential for growth	27
Enhancing the value of women's sport to the media and sponsors	29
Women journalists	30
Finance, including sponsorship and prize money	31
Grants from public sources	32
Commercial Sponsorship	34
Training and scholarships	36
Prize money	37
Role models	38
Leadership of sport governing bodies	38
Coaches	40
4 Sport governing bodies	42
Conclusions	45
Formal Minutes	49
Witnesses	50
Published written evidence	51
List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament	53

1 Introduction

1. It is widely acknowledged that one of the major health issues facing the UK is the decline in physical activity by the population, leading to a rise in obesity and associated conditions. Physical activity also promotes mental well-being, and both participation in and viewing of sport are important parts of the UK's culture. It was widely hoped that the London Olympics and Paralympics would renew interest in participation in sport, leading to a growth in activity at the grass roots and encouraging the more talented to aspire to competing at an elite level.

2. Although the reasons for participating in sport apply equally to men and women, there remain stark differences between men's sport and women's sport. At the elite level, women's sport gains much less sponsorship and media coverage, and prize money is lower; at the grassroots level, participation by women is significantly lower than by men. We therefore decided to launch an inquiry into the barriers to women's participation in sport and how to overcome these. In particular, we focused on:

- The availability of facilities for training and playing sport, for both girls and women, at elite and grassroots levels;
- finance, including sponsorship and prize money;
- media coverage of women's sport; and
- the variety of sports on offer to girls at school.

We later added to this the importance of female role models, as elite sportswomen, coaches and managers.

3. We took oral evidence from a number of women involved in sport, Lottie Birdsall-Strong, a young footballer, Joanne Herbertson, a coach, and Chrissie Wellington, a triathlon champion; from organisations seeking to increase participation by women in sport, such as StreetGames, the Muslim Women's Sport Foundation and the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation; from a selection of sports governing bodies (England Netball, the Football Association, the Lawn Tennis Association, the Rugby Football Union) and from Premiership Rugby; from the media, the BBC, BT, Channel 4, Sky, the National Union of Journalists and the Sports Journalists Association; and from the sports authorities, Sport England—which has responsibility for promoting sport at grassroots level—and UK Sport (which is responsible for funding elite sport), and from the Minister for Sport, Mrs Helen Grant MP.

4. Many other organisations and individuals submitted written evidence to us. Both the written and the oral evidence that we received are published on our website.¹ We are very grateful to all who provided evidence to our inquiry.

5. During the course of our inquiry, there were frequent reminders that men's sport is accorded a higher status than women's, ranging from the comparatively unreported triumphs of women footballers to the extensive commentary on the make-up worn by

¹ At <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/culture-media-and-sport-committee/inquiries/parliament-2010/women-and-sport/>

some athletes at the Winter Olympics in Sochi, with a particularly unpleasant example of prejudice in the abuse on Twitter of the Olympic gymnast Beth Tweddle.

Background²

6. For the year to April 2014 more than 7.2 million women and girls (aged 14+) took part in regular sport, which is 31.4% of the female population.³ Whilst Sport England's Active People Survey (APS) measured some gains in women taking part in sport and exercise between the start of the survey in October 2005 and April 2014, the gap between men's and women's participation in sport remains, and there is growing concern about the participation of young women. The last full year of data (Active People 8) was for the year to April 2014, and this showed that 40.9% of men play sport once a week compared to 30.3% of women (nearly 2 million more men than women).

7. While about 590,000 more women have played sport once a week in 2013–14 compared with 2005 when London won the bid to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, there are specific concerns about the younger age cohorts: at the age of 18 twice the proportion of women as men take part in no sport at all each month. Also, 16–25 year old women registered no growth in participation for several years, one of very few groups to show no growth, though the latest figure shows a small increase on October 2013.⁴

8. The more detailed analysis provided by our witnesses showed that women's participation is significantly lower among the lower socio-economic groups. In the higher socio-economic groups, about 35% of women play sport regularly, whereas this figure is just 23% for those in the lower socio-economic groups. The pattern is the same for girls aged 16–25, where—although the overall participation rates are higher than for older women—49% from the higher socio-economic groups take part in sport at least once a week compared to 36% from the lower socio-economic groups.⁵

9. The research also identified that location is an important factor, and women in the most deprived areas play sport the least. In the poorest areas of England (local authorities with the highest levels of deprivation), 27% of women play sport regularly, compared to 33% in the wealthiest areas. With over 5 million people living in the most deprived areas of England, and with 98% of these deprived areas being located in urban areas, there is a

2 Most of the data in this section of the report is taken from Sport England's Active People Survey, which is now in the eighth year of operation. This is a survey of over 160,000 people in England. The data is robust, collected by expert survey companies, and is regulated by the UK Statistics Authority. Results are released every six months, and the figures are official statistics. The latest data is for the twelve months to April 2014 and is available from <http://www.sportengland.org/research/who-plays-sport>

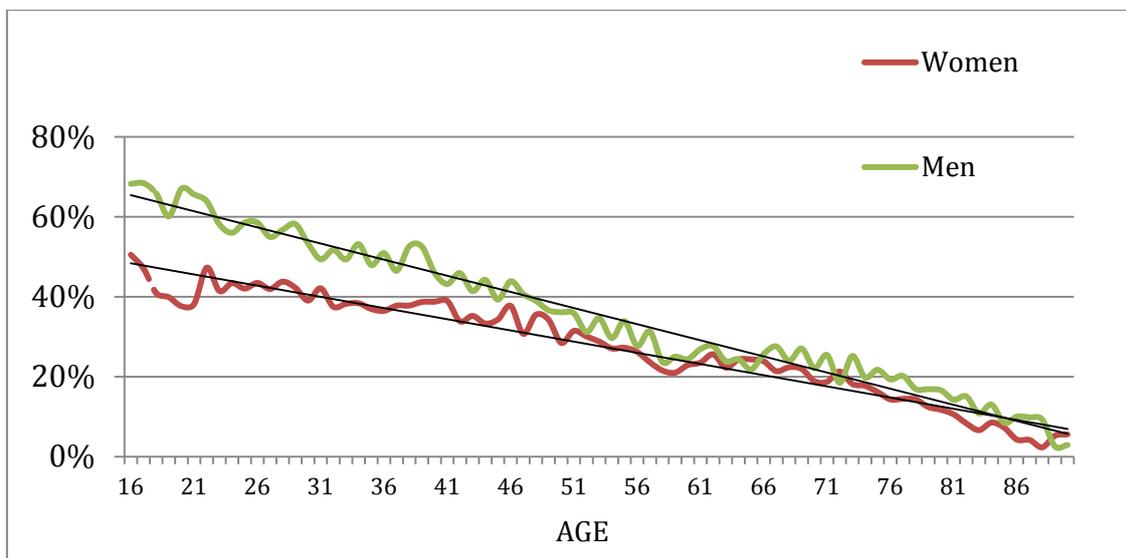
3 Until December 2013, those surveyed were aged 16 or over, but from December 2013 14 and 15 year olds were included. At present, the APS is publishing two sets of results: one including 14 and 15 year olds, and the other just those aged 16 and over, to enable comparisons with earlier years. 14 and 15 year olds have a significantly greater likelihood of taking part in sport (not least because of sports lessons at school) than the older population.

4 WSFF ([WAS0031](#)), para 12 See also Q 240 On the latest small increase, see 'Sport England relief over rise in participation after the falls', *Guardian*, 13 June 2014, p 18 On the decrease in the gender gap as people grow older, see Q 241

5 Sport England ([WAS0039](#)), para 13

strong case for focusing investment in women's sport at these areas in an effort to get more women in the low income groups playing sport.⁶

10. The following graph (taken from Active People 6) shows that participation in sport and physical activity at least once a week declines with age amongst both men and women, but men (as represented by the top line) participate more than women in almost every age group.



This is not just a problem for the sports sector: it has been estimated that inactivity represents £8.2 billion of direct and indirect costs to the NHS,⁷ and individually many women and girls miss out on all the positive health and well-being benefits that an active lifestyle provides.

11. The relative inactivity of women and girls, especially those in poorer communities, is not a result of lack of interest in sport and fitness. Recent research from the WSFF points to greater demand for sport from women than men, with 12 million women wanting to play more sport, over half of whom are currently 'inactive'. We were told that 74% of 15 year old girls would like to be more active.⁸ British Cycling told us that over 64% of people said they would take up cycling if it were safer.⁹

12. The Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation (WSFF) argued that the gender participation gap is so persistently large that the Government (including the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), Department for Education, Department of Health and Sport England) should produce an over-arching strategy to increase women and girl's participation in sport and physical activity; and that sport National Governing Bodies

6 Sport England ([WAS0039](#)), para 14

7 WSFF ([WAS0031](#)), para 7

8 WSFF, *Changing the Game for Girls*, cited in DCMS ([WAS0037](#)), para 12

9 Q211

should be required to show how they would help deliver the strategy in return for public investment.¹⁰

13. Research by the WSFF shows that the drop in girls' participation levels begins to occur before the transition to secondary school. A recent study published in the *British Medical Journal* found that only 38% of seven year-old girls were achieving the recommended amount of physical activity, compared to 63% of boys.¹¹ Girls' activity declines between Years 4 and 6 at primary school, with this decline becoming more pronounced in Years 8 and 9. The same is not true for boys, meaning that by the age of 14 only 8% of girls meet recommended activity levels of one hour a day.¹² This has fallen since 2008, when 12% of girls met this level compared to 32% of boys.¹³ By the age of 16, less than a quarter of girls, compared to 37% of boys, play sport three times a week (Active People 6);¹⁴ and by 18, 65.9% of men play sport at least once a week, compared to 41.0% of women.¹⁵

Reasons for the participation gap

14. Sport England has identified the main barriers to participation by women in sport as:

- Practical/lifestyle barriers (such as having children, changing jobs, moving house; time and cost—including childcare costs; family responsibilities)
- Personal/emotional barriers (Not knowing anyone/wanting to exercise with a friend; belief that muscular and sporty bodies are not feminine, not wanting to look silly)

Sport England found that the personal and emotional barriers were just as important as the practical ones, and would deter many women if not addressed. Poor body image and fear of not being fit enough to take part were significant issues, so it was important for women to experience exercising with people like themselves—in age, degree of fitness and competence—led by trainers with realistic expectations.¹⁶ Lack of information was also identified as a significant barrier, compounded by a lack of time to look for information. Findings from Sport England's Active Women programme¹⁷ show that word of mouth is the most important channel for raising awareness, with 40% of the women who took part hearing about the sessions through word of mouth, 80% recommending them to friends, and 60% bringing friends along with them. Other witnesses added to this list of barriers: lack of access by public transport; the cost of facilities and/or the equipment and clothing needed to participate; a lack of confidence or poor body image; peer pressure; cultural restrictions; the absence of positive role models (including among coaches); competitive or

10 WSFF ([WAS0031](#)), Recommendations A and B. See also Qq34, 38–40 and 79

11 Griffiths LJ, Cortina-Borja M, Sera F, et al, 'How active are our children? Findings from the Millennium Cohort Study'. *BMJ Open* (2013), cited in Youth Sport Trust ([WAS0027](#)), para 4

12 Qq 8–9 and 264

13 NHS Information Centre: Health Survey for England 2008, cited in Q7

14 WSFF ([WAS0031](#)), para 27 and Q8

15 DCMS ([WAS0037](#)), para 6

16 Sport England ([WAS0039](#)), paras 16–19, Q 249

17 Described in Sport England ([WAS0039](#)), paras 33–35

intimidating environments; the perception of clubs as cliquy and unwelcoming to new members.¹⁸

15. There is no shortage of information about the incentives and disincentives to women's participation in sport, and both the Government and other interest groups are well aware of them. Given the variety, inter-relatedness and complexity of the disincentives, however, there are no simple solutions, and tackling the problem will require imaginative approaches and concerted effort by a number of bodies, including government agencies, sport governing bodies, schools, the media and potential sponsors.

18 Chrissie Wellington ([WAS0024](#)) plus BT ([WAS0025](#)), para 17

2 Attracting new participants

16. Between 2012 and 2017, Sport England will invest over £1 billion in a Youth and Community Sport Strategy. As part of this, Sport England is investing £100 million a year in 46 national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) over the same period. This investment is intended to bring about four outcomes:

- An increase in participation (at least once a week for 30 minutes at moderate intensity) by 14–25-year-olds
- An increase in participation (as defined above) by adults over 25
- An increase in participation by disabled people
- Improved talent pathways for English athletes (up to the level of performance covered by UK Sport, i.e. podium potential for Olympic or World championships—or their equivalent).

The DCMS commented: “Virtually all of the 46 NGBs have a quantified target in each of these four areas. While there is no separate target for participation by women, in many sports (tennis and swimming are obvious examples) it is difficult to increase participation without having a good offer for women and girls.”¹⁹

17. Sport England found the main things that motivated women and girls to play sport were the opportunity to take part with friends, a non-competitive atmosphere, the support of family or links between the sport-provider and trusted partners such as faith groups, the availability of childcare, girls-only sessions, having fun, safe and comfortable environments, and flexibility in timing.²⁰ We were told that the Us Girls programme—an award-winning programme run by the charity StreetGames, focused on encouraging participation in sports by young women in disadvantaged communities²¹—has shown that (non-sporty) young women want sport that is less formal and is based on friendship groups and fun. Young women from disadvantaged communities generally need subsidised sporting activities that are delivered locally in a relaxed, safe, female-only environment, involve music, include a variety of activities to try but are linked to the promotion of health and well-being, and are delivered by the right coach/leader.²²

18. However, according to StreetGames, the way sport has traditionally been organised has made it hard for even interested and motivated young women in disadvantaged areas to participate in sport. This is because sporting outlets are scarce in disadvantaged communities, especially for women, traditional sports are often not offered or packaged in

19 DCMS ([WAS0037](#)), paras 14–15

20 Sport England ([WAS0039](#)), para 20

21 The US Girls project, which ran for two years (April 11–April 13) at a cost of £2.3 million, worked in 60 deprived neighbourhoods and reached over 34,000 participants (16–25-year-old females) using over 700 sports coaches. Examples of sports popular with the women involved, of which around 40% were not doing any sport before joining the programme, were dance and fitness, swimming, and badminton. The project was voted ‘Best Sports Project 2013’ in the National Lottery Awards.

22 StreetGames ([WAS0010](#)), paras 1.2, 1.5, and 1.21–1.22 See also Q6

a way that are attractive to women, transport is not available and cost is a significant issue, as well as the problems of lack of confidence and cultural barriers.²³

19. The Muslim Women’s Sport Foundation (MWSF) said that women and girls from BAME communities wanted to be more active, but a lack of understanding of their particular needs made participation even more difficult for them than for women in general. In addition to the barriers already listed, they faced a lack of opportunities suited to their needs (for example, many leisure centres ran women-only swimming sessions but could not guarantee that a female lifeguard would be present); practical difficulties such as safety concerns and travel time; family commitments (which persisted throughout their lives); and negative cultural attitudes toward sport for women.²⁴

Types of sport on offer

20. Whilst some sports have seen gains in the past few years, most have not witnessed sustained increases in female participation. Currently, women are far more likely to take part in individual as opposed to team sport, or in non-competitive activities, and—generally—not to belong to clubs. This means that their sporting activity takes place outside the reach of sports governing bodies, through which much of the funding for sporting activities is funnelled. Swimming, going to the gym, running/jogging and Zumba are the top four activities women choose to participate in.²⁵ The WSFF commented:

The fact that “road running” (which counts as Athletics in the Active People Survey) is driving the increase in women’s participation is a good example of how much of sport exists outside the formal NGB world. The large majority of female runners either run alone, or with friends, and whilst they may enter competitions or races, only very few choose to formalise their involvement by joining a club or affiliating to the NGB. The success of activities like Zumba (which is driven and marketed locally by word of mouth) or British Military Fitness (that has capitalised on a trend for extreme or ‘boot camp’ type experiences), demonstrate how much innovation in sports delivery is happening outside of the governing body world.²⁶

21. Sport England provided information about some of the most popular sports for men and women from the point of view of participation.

23 StreetGames ([WAS0010](#)), paras 1.20 and 1.23 See also Q47

24 MWSF ([WAS0023](#)), section 3

25 For example, going to the gym is the second highest activity that women take part in on a weekly basis with 8.2% of women participating in at least one 30 minute gym session per week (Active People Survey October 2011 to October 2012)

26 ([WAS0031](#)), paras 15–16

Examples of sports popular with women and girls			
Sport	Overall Participation	Female (%)	Male
Swimming	2,892,200	1,870,400 (65%)	1,021,800 (35%)
Athletics (which includes running)	1,958,000	823,000 (42%)	1,135,000 (58%)
Tennis	424,300	192,900 (45%)	231,400 (55%)

By comparison – examples of sports popular with men			
Sport	Overall Participation	Female (%)	Male
Football	1,939,700	119,900 (6%)	1,819,800 (94%)
Cricket	189,400	12,900 (7%)	176,500 (93%)
Rugby Union	166,400	10,900 (7%)	155,500 (93%)

Sport at school

22. A recent survey showed that 51% of girls were deterred from physical activity by their experiences of school sport and PE.²⁷ They associated school sports with:

- Lack of choice—46% of the least active girls said they “don’t like the activities we get to do in PE”
- Overly competitive environments—45% of girls agreed that “sport is too competitive”
- Lack of confidence—Over a third of the least active girls didn’t think they had “the skills to do well in sport”
- Body image—75% of girls agreed that “girls are self-conscious of their bodies”

27 WSFF research in its report *Changing the Game for Girls* cited in [\(WAS0031\)](#), para 28 See also Youth Sport Trust [\(WAS0027\)](#), para 12(ii)

- Sport is undervalued—59% of the least active girls didn't think it was important to be good at PE.

Some girls argued that they had too much schoolwork to take part, they had encountered sexism when playing sport, and they would prefer single sex games lessons.²⁸ Others perceived the focus in PE lessons to be always on those who represented the school in sports, with the result that most girls felt neglected and therefore apathetic towards sport. As a result, girls often preferred to play sport outside school. Where a greater variety of sport was on offer, they could exercise more seriously and they were more likely to have a coach to guide and encourage them.²⁹

23. Lottie Birdsall-Strong, a football player, former member of the England youth squad and recipient of a scholarship to study and play college football in North Carolina, USA, argued that many of the problems in relation to women's sport in the UK derived from a lack of equality in sports at school. She suggested that a key factor in the comparative success of the USA in encouraging women's participation in sport was Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (also known as the 'Equal Opportunity in Education Act'). Amongst other things, Title IX requires that schools allocate participation opportunities in a non-discriminatory way: in other words, that schools receiving state funds must provide female students with equal opportunities to participate in educational programmes, including Physical Education. Since Title IX was passed, the number of girls participating in secondary school athletics in the USA has increased from fewer than 300,000 to nearly 3 million—from 7% of the relevant female population to nearly 41%.³⁰

24. In the UK there is no requirement that schools' expenditure on sport benefits girls and boys equally. Lottie Birdsall-Strong suggested there was overwhelming anecdotal evidence that funding in the UK was given primarily to boys' sports in schools—anecdotal evidence was the only evidence available because neither the allocation nor the impact of spending was appropriately measured. She did not suggest that the UK replicate Title IX, but preferred an amendment to schools' Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010, adding that the Youth Sport Trust could be an appropriate organisation to monitor funding allocation, resource and opportunity in terms of gender equality.³¹ The Football Association (FA) also considered the impact of Title IX and concluded that, though Title IX itself might not be directly transferable to the UK, the principle of equitable investment for schools was worth considering.³²

25. Sports authorities have been making efforts to improve the teaching of their sport in schools and to increase the enthusiasm of children to play them. The FA noted that the WSFF research (already cited in paragraph 22 above) pointed to poor coaching and lack of support in schools as the two issues most pertinent to girls dropping out from playing football.³³ With a number of our other witnesses, the FA believed that increasing the

28 StreetGames ([WAS0010](#)), paras 1.28-1.29 and Qq18 and 29-31 (WSFF)

29 *Study undertaken by Diva Creative between Jan-April 2013 including an on-line survey with 360 young people and 6 focus groups with 14-16 year olds in areas of high deprivation.* The survey was done for StreetGames: See ([WAS0010](#)), paras 1.25 and 1.27; also MSWF ([WAS0023](#)), para 4.1

30 ([WAS0005](#)), paras 2-3 and Qq69-70

31 ([WAS0005](#)), paras 6-7. See also ([WAS0024](#)) (Chrissie Wellington)

32 FA ([WAS0030](#)), para 30

33 FA ([WAS0030](#)), para 24

number of teachers with a sporting interest and improving their training was essential. Our sister committee, the Education Committee, raised concerns about the short-term (two year) nature of the Government's primary sport premium funding scheme and the lack of a long-term strategy for school sport with sustained funding.³⁴ The FA welcomed the Government's current pilot projects which aim to improve the skills of PE teachers, but would like further increases in physical education training during Initial Teacher Training. The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), Football Association, Lawn Tennis Association and Premiership Rugby all cited programmes to train teachers in primary schools in delivering the skills relevant to their particular sport.³⁵ The ECB and tennis authorities (Tennis Foundation and LTA) also run initiatives which aim to provide young players with regular league matches against similar standard players in a competitive team environment. Similarly, in 2012 the RFU launched a programme to help state secondary schools to offer rugby to their students, the schools being identified in clusters so that they could play rugby against one another locally.³⁶ While none of these initiatives was aimed specifically at girls, we were told that in a number of them participants split roughly half and half between boys and girls. Premiership Rugby was very proud of the number of women teachers trained under its primary school programme, commenting: "This is critical because our experience shows that where female teachers or role models are involved programmes generate higher levels of participation and retention."³⁷

26. When girls were asked to select their favourite sports, and those they would like to do in the future, sports such as swimming, gym, dance and trampolining were ranked highest.³⁸ BT argued that, while there were practical reasons (mainly financial) why schools were unable to offer a wide variety of sports to girls, "Outings to climbing walls, velodromes, riding schools, mountain bike courses should not be out of the question. Links to public schools who have the facilities could be fostered. Every sort of sports club could throw open its doors on a regular basis and make a special point of inviting girls."³⁹

Other witnesses emphasised the importance of forging links between schools and sports clubs. Joanne Herbertson suggested that school teachers should concentrate on instilling a view of sport as fun, core skills and sportsmanship, while external coaches could provide opportunities to try activities such as swimming, Zumba, aerobics, futsal, tennis, badminton, cricket, football, rugby, squash, hockey, karate, basketball and volleyball.⁴⁰ However, we were told that this was not happening: BT cited a failure by local clubs to be inspired by the Olympics to promote their sports to primary schools.⁴¹ England Netball claimed: "The recent announcement of £150 million for primary schools has failed to have the impact it could have had due to the lack of consultation and communication with NGBs [National Governing Bodies] and a seemingly uncoordinated approach to

34 Education Committee, [School Sport following London 2012: No more political football](#), Third Report of Session 2013-14, HC 164, paragraph 70

35 Qq 166-169, 219-220 and 241 and ECB ([WAS0034](#)), paras 2.1-2.3 FA ([WAS0030](#)), paras 27-29, LTA ([WAS0012](#)), paras 39-40, Premiership Rugby ([WAS0013](#))

36 LTA ([WAS0012](#)), para 45, RFU ([WAS0029](#)), paras 8.1-8.4 and Case Study 10, Qq 164-166 (RFU) and 202 (LTA)

37 Premiership Rugby ([WAS0013](#)), Qq170-173. On other, older pupils as role models, see Q18 (WSFF) and Youth Sport Trust ([WAS0027](#)), paras 12(iii) and (iv)

38 Q18 (WSFF)

39 BT ([WAS0025](#)), paras 19-20

40 Joanne Herbertson ([WAS0015](#)). See also England Netball's 'rebranding' of school netball: Q218

41 BT ([WAS0025](#)), para 2

distribution and delivery,” adding that while research indicated that the drop off in physical activity starts as early as nine years of age, direct funding to NGBs was only for those over 14 years.⁴² Others agreed that there was a lack of co-ordination among Ministries, schools, clubs and sports governing bodies.⁴³

27. In 2013 our sister committee, the Education Committee, reported its concerns that, following the abolition of the requirement for schools to report on the proportion of children taking part in at least two hours per week of sport or PE at school, there was no longer any way of measuring the performance of individual schools in this area.⁴⁴ While recognising that the former system did not give an indication of the quality of provision just its quantity, the Committee recommended that the requirement on schools to report on participation be re-instated. Activity levels and fitness are already measured by a number of schools through ‘bleep tests’ on individual pupils, and the results of these could form the basis of a more informative report on progress in improving activity levels amongst pupils.

28. Since the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, the Department for Education has announced an increased focus on competitive sport in schools. A number of those who submitted written evidence to us argued that, while they were not opposed to improving competition, if this change in focus were at the expense of providing general opportunities to participate it might have the perverse consequence of decreasing activity levels among girls.⁴⁵ The WSFF considered that the government needed to make it clear that the first priority for school sport and PE should be health, focusing on getting every girl (and boy) active.⁴⁶ Getting girls active would, it thought, lead to more girls playing competitive sport; however, if the starting focus was on competition then it was likely to lead to fewer girls being active. Ofsted’s report *Beyond 2012 — outstanding physical education for all* (2013) found that “only a few schools have achieved a balance between increasing participation and generating elite performance”.⁴⁷ The WSFF commented: “more needs to be done to turn best practice in a few schools into common practice”.⁴⁸ There was general agreement that best practice consisted of three elements: schools should give children “physical literacy”, so that they could run, jump and throw with confidence; school sport should be fun; and schools should offer a range of sports to encourage the widest possible participation.⁴⁹ From September 2013 the WSFF has been working on a Department of Health funded project with 25 schools to produce best practice examples, and the Youth Sport Trust has been helping 21 schools to engage better with 11–14 year-old girls in sport and to increase participation rates.⁵⁰ We were provided with an example of best practice from New College Leicester, which provides single sex PE lessons, is trying to build links

42 England Netball ([WAS0011](#)), paras 26–28

43 See, eg, BT ([WAS0025](#)), para 22 and Q10 (WSFF)

44 Education Committee, *School Sport following London 2012: No more political football*, Third Report of Session 2013–14, HC 164, paragraphs 127–133

45 See, eg, WSFF ([WAS0031](#)), para 30 and research by the Institute of Youth Sport (2011), *Understanding Psycho-Social Attitudes towards Sport and Activity in Girls: Final Research Report*, cited in Youth Sport Trust ([WAS0027](#)), para 12(v)

46 Qq11 and 15 (WSFF)

47 Quoted in WSFF ([WAS0031](#)), para 31

48 *Ibid.*, para 32

49 Qq 167–169, 256–257 and Youth Sport Trust ([WAS0027](#)), para 12(i)–(iii), for example

50 WSFF ([WAS0031](#)), para 32, and Youth Sport Trust ([WAS0027](#)), para 12(iii)

with female community sports clubs and has changed its PE uniform for both girls and boys to be more comfortable and up-to-date.⁵¹

29. The increasing inactivity of children is, and should be, a major concern to the Government, to parents and to society in general, and schools are key to addressing the problem. We recommend that children’s activity levels be measured annually, and that best practice amongst a few schools is turned into common practice in relation to encouraging higher levels of overall participation. This will need to include addressing specific problems such as poor facilities.

30. Though there have been initiatives to improve the training of teachers in PE, more needs to be done—at both primary and secondary levels—to ensure that PE staff are equipped to support every child in a wide range of activities. We agree with the Education Committee that the two-year timeframe for the primary sport premium is too short and runs the risk of replicating previous short-term fixes rather than providing a long-term solution to the inadequacy of PE teaching in schools.

31. Girls are being deterred from participating in sport by their experiences in school PE lessons. Unfortunately, an emphasis on competitive sport may make this situation worse for some girls. Schools need to be more imaginative in the type of sport that they provide for girls: while some enjoy team games like football and netball, or athletics, others would enjoy sampling a wider variety of activities, such as dance or cycling, or non-traditional games for girls like rugby.

32. While it is unrealistic to expect schools to provide facilities and coaching for a wide variety of sports, there are good opportunities for sports governing bodies to reach out to potential future players and spectators through forging links between local clubs and schools. While some progress is being made in this area, sports governing bodies need to inject more urgency and enthusiasm into this task, otherwise it is doubtful that they will meet their target of increasing participation in sporting activity by 14–25 year olds.

33. Whatever the reality, there is a perception amongst pupils and others that schools care more about, and spend more money on, sport for boys than for girls. We do not want to add to the bureaucracy on schools, but we consider that the decline in girls’ participation in sport is sufficiently serious that schools should be made to focus more attention on the sports offered to girls. This might most easily be done by an amendment to schools’ Public Sector Equality Duty, which we consider to be an effective but less heavy-handed alternative to the USA’s Title IX legislation.

34. Although the Department for Culture, Media and Sport ‘owns’ the Olympic sport legacy, the bodies through which the legacy is preserved have been largely the Department for Education (DfE) and, until recently, the Cabinet Office. The Minister’s responses to our questions about the amount of communication—let alone the co-ordination—between departments were unconvincing and suggested there was little or no real contact.⁵² Sport for girls appears to have suffered as a result. The School Sport Partnership scheme provided the sort of co-operation between schools and community clubs that we are advocating to give girls the chance to try new sports. While the scheme was not perfect, it

51 [\(WAS0026\)](#), paras 5.3–5.5

52 Qq 256, 263 and 268–271

is regrettable that it was scrapped rather than reformed, and it appears to us that the DCMS would not have abolished it so hastily.

35. Given the importance of encouraging children to sustain a life-long commitment to sporting activity, and the fact that school sport currently appears to deter a significant number of girls from sport, we are very concerned about the lack of communication and co-operation between Government departments, which we think presents a serious obstacle to the DCMS in its attempts to deliver the Olympic legacy. We recommend that the DCMS, Department for Education and Department of Health publish a joint annual report to Parliament on school sport, focusing on participation levels, the availability of different types of sport, partnerships with clubs and charities, and training for teachers.

Options after school

36. The WSFF argued that not only would greater participation by women in sport benefit women themselves, but also it offered the greatest opportunity for sport to grow. It was not alone in suggesting, however, that insufficient attention has been paid to how sport may be incorporated into women's wider lifestyles, the level of competition for women's leisure time, and how the opportunities for women to engage in sport may change at different points in their lives.

37. A number of sporting bodies have conducted research into the barriers to women's participation in their sport and have tried to address them.

- In the case of cycling, over 30% of female respondents to a survey identified safety concerns as the main barrier to participating in cycling. The other most common responses were 'lack of knowledge of local routes' and 'nobody to go with'. British Cycling therefore set up a number of programmes to design safer routes, give women the opportunity to gain confidence by cycling in a group, ensuring widespread coverage so that women could find a local event, and providing activities free or keeping costs low. At least in part as a result of these efforts, the number of women cyclists has increased greatly since 2008.⁵³
- England Netball—at least initially—significantly increased participation among women and girls by first conducting extensive consumer research, identifying ten different audiences who had different wants and needs and then trying to adapt what was offered to meet the requirements of the ten groups. A number of the new products were successful, including Back to Netball, a gentle reintroduction to the sport for women over the age of 16 (which won the National Lottery Sports Project of the Year 2012), and Netball Now, a 'pay and play' option for women who did not wish to commit to weekly activity but wanted the flexibility to turn up and play netball when it suited them.⁵⁴
- The LTA reported that, like most other sports,⁵⁵ the number of women playing tennis regularly dropped significantly at the ages of 16, 19 and 25. It decided to

53 Q202 British Cycling ([WAS0007](#)), paras 12, 20–22, 24 and 26

54 Qq 212–214, England Netball ([WAS0011](#)), paras 22–23

55 See, for example, the statistics given for rugby in RFU ([WAS0029](#)), para 6.3

“create a range of products” that adapted tennis to “modern lifestyle demands”. This included a programme called Cardio Tennis, which combines an aerobic workout with tennis drills in hour-long sessions run by a qualified tennis coach.⁵⁶

- Female participation in contact rugby is currently low compared to other sports, but, according to the RFU, it is growing rapidly (a 90% increase since 2004). The RFU has been keen to translate the comparatively large proportion of women attending rugby matches into greater participation. It has developed a Women and Girls’ strategy, the key strands of which are to: create a warm and welcoming club environment; provide local options to meet local need; increase opportunities for girls to play rugby in education settings; and change the perception of rugby to make it more attractive to girls and women. The RFU also expects to see increases in female participation from further development of modified forms of the game, such as rugby fitness and O2 Touch rugby, as research shows these appeal more to women and girls. Premiership Rugby cited the Worcester Warriors’ involvement in forming the Midland Ladies Touch League.⁵⁷
- The FA and Premier League told us they had a number of programmes to encourage women to try or to continue to play football, including recreational programmes at local football clubs, satellite projects set up with Premier League and Football League Clubs to provide opportunities for women aged 14 to 25 to try football and develop their skills, and Just Play festivals based on university and college grounds.⁵⁸
- England Golf described its approach of group tester sessions for women at low-cost, friendly facilities, leading to structured sessions as women became more confident.⁵⁹
- The ECB highlighted the fivefold increase in cricket clubs with women’s and/or girls’ sections between 2002 and 2012, and its programmes for developing the links between local clubs and schools and colleges.⁶⁰

38. StreetGames described its promotion of ‘doorstep sport’, taking sport to disadvantaged communities, working with traditional governing bodies but also with people who had set up their own community interest companies, charities or businesses to deliver sports activities to women and girls. It advocated more support for these people in the form of financial help, expert advice, grants and mentoring schemes.⁶¹

39. The media are also involved. The BBC recently launched a campaign, ‘Get Inspired’, working alongside sports bodies responsible for promoting grassroots initiatives, to inspire people to try new sports and activities, through films, features, guides, and links to events

56 Qq 202 and 217, LTA ([WAS0012](#)), paras 26, 31–34

57 Qq 158–162, 165, RFU ([WAS0029](#)), paras 6.2, 6.4–6.6 and Premiership Rugby ([WAS0013](#))

58 Qq 161–162, 165, and 185, FA ([WAS0030](#)), paras 32–33, 36

59 ([WAS0008](#)), paras 6.3–6.6

60 ([WAS0034](#)), paras 3 and 6

61 StreetGames ([WAS0010](#)), paras 1.5, 1.13, 1.35–1.43

and clubs near them. The related website included a database of more than 60 sports, a postcode finder to locate clubs and events plus links to national governing bodies.⁶²

40. Beyond the programmes of sports governing bodies, *Parkrun* was presented to us as a case study in promoting participation. The model consists of weekly runs in public parks, which are organised by community groups, free to the user, local and easy to access, open to all, require no pre-booking or selection, there is no dress code; they encourage family involvement; they are timed (offering the opportunity to track progress) and often there are post-run social gatherings. Women and girls accounted for 49.5% of registrations.⁶³

41. While all of the examples address some of the difficulties faced by women, they do not tackle many of the generic problems: the perception of sport as unfeminine, low confidence levels, family and work commitments (and childcare difficulties), access and cost.

42. One of the fundamental problems faced by those wishing to increase women's and girls' participation in sport is the poor body image many women have of themselves. In response, the Government set up a Body Confidence Campaign, which aims to promote positive and diverse representations of appearance in the media and other cultural forms, greater media literacy so that individuals are more resistant to unrealistic and harmful presentations of 'ideal' body shapes, and young people's confidence in their value to society. The 2013 Body Confidence progress report has demonstrated "significant successes" to date while recognising that what is sought is major cultural change, and there is still much to be done.⁶⁴

43. Chrissie Wellington, the triathlon champion, suggested that clubs and facilities should offer beginner classes open to all to reduce embarrassment amongst participants; relax dress codes; provide greater flexibility in membership packages (including 'try before you buy' schemes); offer classes that parents could take part in with their children, or child-minding exchanges among gym or club members; and establish partnerships with transport providers and share-a-ride schemes. She and StreetGames suggested that the Government could subsidise entry to sports facilities—especially for children.⁶⁵

44. The FA noted the differences in coaching needs between boys and girls: boys laid emphasis on an experienced and qualified coach, while girls said they needed an understanding and empathetic coach. To this end the FA has worked with the Us Girls programme (through StreetGames) to deliver sessions to all County FA staff on the importance of tailoring sessions to the needs and motivations of young female players.⁶⁶ Joanne Herbertson advocated an approach including 'girls only' coaching opportunities in football and cricket (mother and daughter open nights, women only coaching sessions in schools, sports clubs, or in open spaces like local parks or the beach), using social media, flyers and e-mails to encourage new participants and varieties of games.⁶⁷ We comment further on the importance of coaching later in this report.

62 BBC ([WAS0003](#)), paras 27–30

63 Chrissie Wellington ([WAS0024](#)) and Diana Egerton–Warburton ([WAS0022](#)), para 6

64 DCMS ([WAS0037](#)), paras 24–25

65 Chrissie Wellington ([WAS0024](#)) and StreetGames ([WAS0010](#)), para 1.12

66 FA ([WAS0030](#)), para 26

67 ([WAS0015](#))

45. One of the initiatives by Sport England is the Place Based Pilot, which was launched in Bury on 10 May 2013 with £2.3 million funding. This intensive campaign is focused on changing the sporting habits of local women and girls by targeting and engaging with the inactive. The four pillars to the main programme are:

- outdoor fitness
- NGB fitness programmes (including netball, tennis, running, cycling)
- later life activities (including Pilates, yoga, tea dances) and
- fitness and dance (e.g. Zumba).

46. Sport England described the approach as follows:

This campaign is about changing culture, habits and behaviour driven by understanding local women, their lifestyles, their social networks and sport habits. It also seeks to establish what motivates them to engage in sport and physical activity and then designing a tailored programme of activity to meet those needs, underpinned by a marketing campaign which speaks directly to women. It will explicitly address the emotional as well as the practical barriers to playing sport.⁶⁸

47. As well as recruiting a workforce and making use of social networks and digital platforms to publicise the initiative, the project has involved refurbishing Bury's tennis and netball courts, installing three outdoor gyms, modernising the changing rooms in the main leisure centres and installing two mobile swimming pools. Providers include the local authority, private gym operators, sports and fitness coaches and local sports clubs. The Bury project uses 68 venues.⁶⁹ Small grants (of up to £1,000) are available to clubs or groups who need some investment to support coaches and activities directly working with women and girls. The scheme was intended to be rolled out nationwide after a year, implementing the successes and discoveries gleaned from the pilot.

48. While the Bury pilot seems to be succeeding in recruiting women to sport, previous programmes have found it more difficult to retain them: in 2011 Sport England put £8.2 million of Lottery funding into 20 projects to get more women from disadvantaged communities playing sport. At the end of 2012, almost 30,000 women had taken part in this *Active Women* programme, and the majority said that they would have done less or no sport without the project, and most said that they had had fun and felt better and more self-confident as a result of taking part.⁷⁰ Reaching the target groups and retention had proved difficult however.⁷¹ With the Bury pilot, the aim is to reach 45,000 women in Bury and retain 10,000 of them.⁷² Sport England was confident this was possible for three reasons. The first was that the investment being made into improving facilities would help retention. Secondly, the approach taken in deciding on provision—listening to what women wanted and then supplying it—meant that women were more likely to continue with the activities. Finally, continuing demand gave an incentive for local sports providers

68 Sport England ([WAS0039](#)), paras 38–42

69 Qq 243–245

70 Sport England ([WAS0039](#)), paras 33–34

71 Q 246

72 DCMS ([WAS0037](#)), para 21

to make the commercial investment in continuing activities after the programme had ended, and would give health benefits also which would encourage the local authorities to help in offering low cost facilities.⁷³

49. We look forward to the analysis of the Bury project, which appears to be imaginative and sensitive in adapting provision of sport to women's lives rather than expecting the reverse to take place. We hope that it is successful in sustaining the initial level of interest among women.

50. Sports providers are experimenting with a number of options designed to meet women's needs for flexible, fun sporting activity. Some of the examples listed above are also low-cost and comparatively easy to organise, requiring only readily-available facilities and little or no specialist equipment. It seems likely, from the success they have achieved so far, that these initiatives will spread through the country. However, parkruns and cycling do not suit everyone, and there remain difficulties in accessing suitable facilities for other types of sport.

51. We recognise that some progress has been made since 2005, but we are concerned about the persistently low rates of participation in sport by women and girls. We believe that this issue should be higher on the Government's agenda and, to this end, we recommend that the DCMS and Department for Health publish a joint report annually, in the wake of the APS statistics, indicating their response to those statistics.

Availability of facilities

52. One of the main barriers to participation is the shortage of suitable facilities near to where people live and work. Studies have shown that 64% of women would exercise more if there were more facilities in their local area and they were cheaper.⁷⁴ We were told that the facilities that existed were not welcoming enough, did not offer 'fun' activities, too much ability was expected of participants at the start, coaches were unfriendly and not local, and often the facilities were inaccessible to people with disabilities.

Cost and location of facilities

53. There are a significant number of outdoor facilities for team games and some other sports—for example, there are more than 35,000 football pitches across the country, shared by about 113,000 teams, there are about 2,000 community rugby clubs in England, 77% of which have their own ground, and there are over 20,000 tennis courts in Great Britain, about 7,000 of which are community facilities open to the public. However, many players are dependent on access to publicly owned and managed facilities. For example, 52% of football games are played on school and college grounds and a further 31% in local authority facilities, and over 40% of cricket is played on local authority pitches. Few of the 5,000 women's and girls' football teams own their own ground or are primary tenants.⁷⁵ The pressure on local authority and educational finances has led to a reduction in the

73 Qq 244–245

74 Study by the WSFF, cited in Sport England ([WAS0039](#)), para 43. See also England Netball ([WAS0011](#)), para 4

75 Q223 FA ([WAS0030](#)), paras 5 and 7, RFU ([WAS0029](#)), para 7.1, LTA ([WAS0012](#)), para 8 and ECB ([WAS0034](#)), para 3.4

number, availability and quality of facilities. The FA told us that in some places local authority hire charges seemed likely to rise by 200%.⁷⁶ There were press reports of football teams boycotting local authority pitches earlier this year because of rising hire costs and the poor state of the grounds after a wet winter and resulting intensive use of grass pitches in the drier weather.

54. Although our witnesses supported the development of better facilities, they were uniformly anxious that there should be no net loss of facilities. While welcoming the enhanced protections outlined in the Government's National Planning Policy framework, the ECB remained very concerned about the sustainability of local authority facilities because of the budgetary constraints. The FA strongly supported the maintenance of Sport England's role as statutory consultee. It also considered that strengthening any community programmes that protect playing fields, such as the Community Right to Bid, would be very beneficial for sport.⁷⁷

55. England Netball was "in no doubt that its ability to grow participation in netball will be constrained by the lack of accessible and affordable facilities". Its strategy to increase participation is based on a netball centre model, where multiple programmes for all ranges of ability take place on one site. It has found that where netball centres exist participation rates are higher than areas where programmes are spread across a number of sites. However, the netball centre model requires both outdoor and indoor facilities on one site and, according to England Netball, the impact of local authority budget cuts is adding to a significant shortage of appropriate indoor facilities and a serious deterioration in the condition of a number of the outdoor facilities across the country, some of which it considered potentially dangerous. Moreover, many local authority sites are threatened with closure due to budget cuts, and hire costs are rising.⁷⁸ As a result of shortage of facilities elsewhere, England Netball was turning to commercial providers. The LTA also noted a growth in partnerships between private tennis clubs, community facilities and schools to help maintain the community facilities and to try to increase participation.⁷⁹

56. StreetGames emphasised that, especially amongst 'hard to reach' demographics like low income teenage girls and women from black and ethnic minority groups, there is a strong preference for using indoor rather than outdoor facilities (only 14% of Us Girls sessions that took place in 2012 and 2013 were at outdoor venues), but—like England Netball—it complained of a shortage of indoor facilities, and the cost of hiring them.⁸⁰ Moreover, StreetGames suggested that young women who have limited or no previous sporting experience are unlikely to visit traditional sport settings/venues, so providing activity in non-traditional sports venues in the local community is likely to be more attractive to them.⁸¹ The US Girls programme delivered by StreetGames used a variety of

76 Q183

77 Qq 183–184 and ECB ([WAS0034](#)), para 3.4. Local authorities are now required to keep a list of 'community assets' such as recreation grounds, whether publicly or privately owned. Any owner of such an asset wishing to sell it has to notify the local authority, which in turn has to notify any interested parties. The Community Right to Bid is a legal right for community groups to 'pause' the sale of an asset for up to six months, in order to prepare a bid to buy it themselves.

78 England Netball ([WAS0011](#)), paras 5–7

79 Qq221–222 and 238

80 StreetGames ([WAS0010](#)), paras 1.11–1.12 and MWSF ([WAS0023](#)), para 5.2

81 StreetGames ([WAS0010](#)), para 1.7

local community venues, including both traditional and non-traditional sports facilities, but StreetGames (and England Netball) reported reluctance on behalf of some schools to open their facilities up for community use.⁸²

57. Sport England's Iconic Facilities Fund has invested £39 million to support 26 large-scale, multi-sport construction projects.⁸³ Though welcome, this is a small contribution to the provision of local, inexpensive facilities.

58. We are concerned that there are too few facilities to enable people easily to participate in sport. We acknowledge the pressure on local authority budgets, but we fear that a diminution in the number and quality of sporting facilities will simply increase the need for more expensive health and social care interventions in a less fit population, even if one does not take into account the loss to individuals. Provision of some basic facilities—pitches, swimming pools, sports halls—at low cost should be seen as a contribution to public health rather than a leisure programme.

59. We recommend a review of programmes, such as the Community Right to Bid, to enable local people more easily to defend the open spaces and facilities that they value.

60. Schools also have an important role to play in ensuring facilities are available in every community. We acknowledge the pressures on schools because of local authority budget cuts, but nevertheless we were disappointed to learn that some are reluctant to open up their facilities. This should be challenged. Both publicly-funded schools and those which claim charitable status have a duty to serve the local community, and, if they have sports facilities, should be required to report to the local authority, DfE or Charity Commission, as relevant, how they make those facilities available to local people.

Suitability of facilities

61. Sport England acknowledged that improvements in facilities could make a significant difference to women's inclination to play sport,⁸⁴ and there were concerns that for some women, such as Muslim women and those with disabilities, a lack of appropriate facilities was a major barrier to participation. More generally, it was felt that some facilities needed to be of a higher standard and the service to customers improved so that women were not deterred from continuing with sport once they had started.⁸⁵

62. A study by the WSFF found that 55% of women would exercise more if local facilities were of a better quality. In the Sports Satisfaction Survey 2012, 56% of women said that the quality of non-sports facilities such as changing rooms was of particular importance to them.⁸⁶ Research by the Rugby Football Union and the WSFF suggested that the main barriers to women and girls playing rugby were the changing and clubhouse facilities.⁸⁷

82 StreetGames ([WAS0010](#)), para 1.11; England Netball ([WAS0011](#)), para 5

83 Sport England ([WAS0039](#)), para 44

84 Sport England ([WAS0039](#)), para 43

85 Q4 (WSFF)

86 Cited in Sport England ([WAS0039](#)), para 43

87 RFU ([WAS0029](#)), para 7.3

63. School changing rooms often lack privacy and basic amenities, like adequate hot water. The Business Development Manager of New College Leicester said: “Secondary school changing rooms are probably the last place on earth that a young female 11–16 years old would like to be seen in.”⁸⁸

64. The Government has recognised the problem of inadequate facilities and, through Sport England, has provided investment, including £69.9 million for 1,361 small facilities upgrades, including changing rooms (through the Inspired Facilities programme), and over £9 million for 38 medium-sized projects, initially focusing on artificial pitches and swimming pool changing facilities (through the Improvement Fund), as well as the £39 million for large-scale construction projects mentioned in paragraph 58 above.⁸⁹ Sport England emphasised that changes were often as basic as ensuring that toilets could be used by women as well as men, showers had individual cubicles and there was warm water—it was not a matter of cossetting women.⁹⁰

65. The football and rugby authorities described their programmes for investing millions of pounds in improving club facilities, especially changing rooms, over the last decade and for the next few years, for the benefit of both men and women. However, as the Football Foundation admitted,⁹¹ its investment of £780 million in the last ten years has regenerated only around 6% of facilities in England, and “has barely scratched the surface of the renovations and builds required.” The RFU’s £72 million of investment in 763 projects in community rugby clubs also is just part of the investment needed to improve changing rooms.⁹² The tennis authorities have also invested substantially over the last few years, though in their case mainly to provide floodlights and indoor structures to extend playing hours and to provide opportunities to play tennis all year around.⁹³

66. Both StreetGames and the MWSF pointed out that some women, often those from BAME backgrounds, either preferred or had to exercise in an exclusively female environment. The ability to provide female-only sport sessions is currently protected in the 2010 Equality Act (where it can be demonstrated that the sessions are in response to low participation rates amongst women). ‘Women only’ sessions are often very popular, but while many facilities offer them, this does not necessarily meet the needs of some members of ethnic or religious minorities, who require an area with no male access or viewing, where windows and doors are closed off to the general public, and where participants and staff are all female. The MWSF reported that there was a serious shortage of appropriate facilities, giving as an example that many new sports halls were built open-plan or with viewing galleries or gyms overlooking the hall, thereby enabling the general public to view the activity and making the hall unusable for these women. We were also told that male lifeguards were sometimes provided to supervise ‘women only’ swimming sessions.⁹⁴

88 [\(WAS0026\)](#), para 13

89 Sport England [\(WAS0039\)](#), para 44 See also Q 258

90 Qq 258 and 261

91 Quoted in FA [\(WAS0030\)](#), paras 9–11 and Q183. See also Premier League [\(WAS0035\)](#), paras 2–4. The Football Foundation is a football facility charity jointly funded by The FA, Premier League and Government/Sport England.

92 RFU [\(WAS0029\)](#), para 7.3, Q 178

93 LTA [\(WAS0012\)](#), para 8

94 MWSF [\(WAS0023\)](#), para 5.1 and StreetGames [\(WAS0010\)](#), para 1.8, Qq35–37 and 42

Equal access to facilities

67. Several witnesses suggested that women and girls did not experience equitable access to facilities and pitch time. Joanne Herbertson, a coach, stated that in Northumberland the problem was especially severe in winter due to a lack of indoor or floodlit facilities, but she argued that even at other times men and boys were given priority, especially in cricket, as the men's games often generated more income for the club.⁹⁵ Sport England acknowledged this was a problem.⁹⁶ Both the FA and the Rugby Football union admitted that women's games were traditionally relegated to Sundays, to be played after all the men's and boys' teams had completed their matches.⁹⁷ England Netball said that, even where appropriate indoor facilities existed, its sport was often "fighting a losing battle" against five-a-side football participants who were prepared, or were able, to pay higher court costs.⁹⁸

68. The Scottish Ladies' Golfing Association pointed to an anomaly arising from the long-established nature of many golf clubs in Scotland. Traditionally, women had access to courses during the week while men, because of work commitments, played at weekends. This allocation of time endures, despite the fact that men and women now pay the same membership fee, which is a disincentive to working women to take up the sport.⁹⁹

Alternative ways of providing facilities

69. Satellite Clubs are extensions or outposts of community sports clubs which are established in a new community venue (usually a secondary school or college) and are staffed by coaches and volunteers from the community sports club. A key element of Sport England's Youth and Community Sport Strategy 2012–2017 is to create at least 5,000 satellite clubs. Sport England wants to offer every secondary school in England the opportunity to host a satellite community sports club by 2017. The programme reached its 2,000 club milestone in April 2014.¹⁰⁰

70. Sport England has been working to establish a number of "girls only" satellite clubs where there is a clear demand. Of the 1,500 satellite clubs in operation when the Minister gave oral evidence to us in February, 150 were girls only, and it was expected that this number would increase. A range of sports were already represented among these clubs, including netball, football, cricket, rugby union, rugby league and volleyball.¹⁰¹ The tennis authorities have joined with 'Premier League 4 Sport'¹⁰² football clubs to provide tennis facilities in satellite clubs, and there is a plan to grow this through establishing 200 tennis satellite clubs on school sites over the next four years.¹⁰³ Additional sports hosted at 'Premier League 4 Sport' football clubs are badminton, judo, table tennis, basketball,

95 Joanne Herbertson ([WAS0015](#))

96 Q 267

97 Qq 174 and 184

98 England Netball ([WAS0011](#)), para 5. See also Wayne Allsopp of New College Leicester ([WAS0026](#)), paras 1.4–1.5

99 ([WAS0032](#))

100 'Satellite clubs reaches 2,000 milestone in a year', Sport England press notice dated 11 April 2014

101 Qq 251 and 262

102 For a description of this programme, see Premier League ([WAS0035](#)), paras 13–15

103 LTA ([WAS0012](#)), paras 43–44

handball, hockey, golf, boxing and athletics.¹⁰⁴ Meanwhile, British Cycling's 'Go Ride' programme with children in schools has been linked to local cycling clubs to provide as many opportunities as possible for young people to begin and continue cycling.¹⁰⁵

71. Other witnesses suggested alternative approaches to 'bringing sport to women'. Chrissie Wellington advocated an expansion in projects to facilitate mobile provision of equipment in rural areas, such as schemes to transport sports equipment from village to village, or 'mobile gyms' that could visit schools and colleges regularly. She also suggested that employers could do more to encourage sporting activity by providing sport facilities for employees, or even changing facilities and showers, or setting up work sports leagues or training, or encouraging employees to engage in sport for charity as part of their commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility.¹⁰⁶ BT reported that a group of children working with local charity Community Links put together a 'pop-up' tennis court under a flyover in East London in the summer of 2013. The court, net, rackets and sponge balls were provided free of charge, and anyone was welcome to play: lack of expertise or ability was no barrier as it was intended just to provide fun. It was advertised through word of mouth, families and groups of friends went to see it and it was used very heavily.¹⁰⁷

72. We understand that the economic situation has severely limited the financial resources that public bodies can apply to the maintenance and improvement of sports facilities, and we acknowledge the attention that at least some sports governing bodies are giving to updating and improving sports grounds and clubs. However, more emphasis should be given to the needs of women, and of different groups of women, in the design and staffing of facilities.

73. In bringing so many dilapidated and outdated facilities up to standard progress is likely to be slow. In the meantime, enterprising people are trying out alternatives to traditional facilities, and we commend all these efforts to bring cheap and accessible sport to people. Sport England is already working with a number of these people, but we recommend that Sport England draw up a strategy to assist them with advice, small grants and to spread best practice, as locally organized, locally promoted sport seems to us the most promising way of increasing participation not only by women but also by men.

104 Premier League ([WAS0035](#)), para 14

105 Qq 202 and 217

106 ([WAS0024](#)) and Q85

107 BT ([WAS0025](#)), para 16

3 Inspiring women

Women's sport and the media

74. Traditionally, women's sport has been largely ignored by the media, except when women's competitions have been held at the same time as the men's equivalent (for example, tennis championships, or athletics meetings) or in the few sports where women compete directly with men (for example, horseracing or the triathlon).¹⁰⁸ Sports journalism has been predominantly by men, for men, and it has been assumed that there is little or no interest in women's sport among either sex. This attitude has contributed to the perception that sport is unfeminine and to the tendency of girls and women to drop out of sporting activity, which reinforces a lack of interest in women's sport at the elite level.

75. The 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in London provided an opportunity to change this situation: the achievements of female athletes were widely reported and their successes celebrated. Questions remained, however, on whether this interest in women's sport would be sustained over the medium to long term, and whether the 'Olympic effect' would spread to other sports.

76. There was broad agreement among our witnesses that broadcasters have been more committed to covering women's sport since the 2012 Olympics. The Sports Journalists Association suggested that the London 2012 Olympics was a watershed for women's football as far as the mainstream media was concerned, and it argued that the many female sporting heroes produced by the Games "were afforded the same attention, the same respect" as their male counterparts. However, as both the Sports Journalists Association and the National Union of Journalists pointed out, these women represented sports (athletics, equestrian, cycling, rowing) that receive little media coverage outside major competitions, even when the competitors are men.¹⁰⁹

77. The BBC, BT Sport and Sky all provided us with numerous examples of their coverage of women's sports, and of tournaments where women competed alongside men.¹¹⁰ The BBC emphasised the importance of free to air sports coverage,¹¹¹ and the way in which its public service obligation required it to support a wide range of sports (15–20 when television, radio and online coverage were taken into account), not just those that delivered big audiences: "Indeed, some of the events we cover will attract lower audiences than could have been achieved by other (non-sports) programming".¹¹² BT said it aimed to be "the foremost venue for women's sport stories, exclusives and campaigns,"¹¹³ and affirmed its commitment to women's football and tennis. Sky pointed to its coverage of netball, and listed among other sports covered in 2013 two women's golf tournaments,

108 For the triathlon, see Qq68–69

109 SJA ([WAS0014](#)), paras 20 and 24–25 and NUJ ([WAS0019](#)), para 12.

110 See also DCMS ([WAS0037](#)), paras 30–32, FA ([WAS0030](#)), para 21, LTA ([WAS0012](#)), paras 20–25, RFU ([WAS0029](#)), paras 2.3–2.4, England Netball ([WAS0011](#)), para 20

111 It noted that in 2012 while the BBC accounted for 2% of TV sports *output* hours in the UK, it accounted for over 50% of TV sports *viewing* hours: BBC ([WAS0003](#)), para 6

112 BBC ([WAS0003](#)), paras 10–11, 14, 17–19. This lists the events broadcast by the BBC over the previous twelve months, covering sports such as football, rugby, golf, netball and cricket.

113 BT ([WAS0025](#)), paras 10–15

international cricket matches, the US Open Tennis Championship, squash and table tennis championships, athletics, domestic and international badminton, equestrian events and indoor and world league hockey.¹¹⁴ Channel 4's emphasis was different. Its focus was on one or two areas—recently, coverage of disability sport and horseracing—and it noted that these were sports in which women competed on an equal footing.¹¹⁵ All four broadcasters also described the growth of reportage of women's sport and greater focus on individual sportswomen in magazine and news programmes, and the extent of coverage of women's sporting competitions and matches on their websites.

78. Nevertheless, many viewers are interested only in 'big events', showing little inclination to watch even athletics World Championships, despite the participants and level of performance being virtually the same as in the Olympics. The fact that women's sporting fixtures have fewer spectators than men's does not help: TV coverage is far more attractive to viewers if it shows full rather than empty stadiums, but enthusiasm for attending sporting fixtures is increased by seeing sport on television. The BBC commented about the Women's Football European Championships:

all the matches on BBC Three achieved above the timeslot average for both share and reach, and audience appreciation scores were high. That being said,... a typical England Group Stage match in the Women's European Football Championship attracted a peak audience of around 1 million, compared to the men's equivalent last year of 10-15 million.¹¹⁶

79. Most of our witnesses considered that there had been less progress in improving the quantity and quality of coverage in the printed press. Against the trend was the Sports Journalists' Association, which submitted that there has been a growing appreciation of women's sport and a steady increase in coverage in both print and broadcast outlets, which has accelerated since London 2012. It considered that the national football, rugby and cricket teams were beginning to attract serious attention and column inches.¹¹⁷ Most newspapers still cover men's Premier League football far more extensively than anything else, however. Exceptions to this have been the *Independent on Sunday* and the "i", which have both published commitments to increase their coverage of women's sport and were considered to have lived up to that commitment so far. The *Sunday Times* has also shown commitment in the form of long term support for the Sports Women of the Year Awards, and the decision by its weekly *Style* magazine to feature sportswomen more often. *Style* magazine and the weekly magazine *Stylist* were cited to us as "rare" examples of the 'women's press' taking an interest in women's sport.¹¹⁸

80. StreetGames told us of the difficulties it had experienced in raising media interest in its activities, except when high-profile individuals like Nicola Adams and Victoria Pendleton were involved in an event. It excluded from its criticism women's sections of the national newspapers, women's lifestyle media and the sports trade journals, in particular *SportSister*.¹¹⁹

114 Sky ([WAS0036](#)), paras 2.2–2.4

115 Channel 4 ([WAS0028](#))

116 BBC ([WAS0003](#)), para 15

117 SJA ([WAS0014](#)), paras 5–19, 27–35

118 ([WAS0031](#)), para 35

119 StreetGames ([WAS0010](#)), paras 1.15–1.16. See also Q25 (WSFF)

The potential for growth

81. The DCMS considered that London 2012 demonstrated the potential for much greater media coverage of women's sport. The Culture Secretary wrote to national broadcasters in September 2012 about the importance of keeping the spotlight on female athletes and their sporting accomplishments. The DCMS has urged all the major broadcasters and the printed press to do more, and it has hosted two roundtables¹²⁰ to discuss how to improve coverage. The DCMS suggested to us there had been some progress, particularly from the broadcasters—listing a number of tournaments and matches covered, on television and radio—but it conceded: “There is still more work to be done”, not only to increase media coverage of women's sport but also to improve the quality of the content presented to the media and to increase commercial sponsorship of women's sport.¹²¹ As far as the print media were concerned, the DCMS concluded: “The fact that these magazines are beginning to promote sport to female readers, where usually they would be more reluctant to do so indicates a small but positive shift in attitudes towards the role and relevance of sport in media targeted at women.”¹²²

82. The NUJ highlighted trivialising or simply disrespectful comments on sportswomen by both sports commentators and sports leaders as indications of a refusal to treat women as equal participants in sport, adding: “What appears to be happening is that notions and perceptions of femininity, largely promoted by the media, do not include being sporty. It isn't just taking part in sport that is unfeminine. Having an interest in sport is, for women, straying into male territory.”¹²³

83. There are comparatively easy ways in which the media could contribute to reinforcing the view that women's sport is normal and worthy of interest. One example would be for more national newspapers to publish the results of women's matches alongside the men's. Another would be for journalists and commentators to refrain from discussing the appearance of sportswomen and from making derogatory comments about the ability of women in general to play sports.

84. The January round table meeting with broadcasters noted that some sports had been very successful in promoting the women's game to broadcasters. As already noted, these included sports where men and women compete at the same event, such as athletics, or those with an integrated sponsorship deal, such as cycling.¹²⁴ Others such as cricket had attracted media partners through sustained engagement and by developing an approach that appealed to the broadcasters.¹²⁵ After discussion with the BBC, the FA agreed to move the women's FA Cup Final from Monday to Sunday, to enable fuller coverage and promotion.¹²⁶ There was consensus that interesting stories and people attract media

120 The first in January 2013 for broadcasters (BBC, ITV, Sky), journalists, and sports bodies including British Cycling, British Rowing, England Netball and the Football Association; and the second in May 2013 for the Professional Publishers Association, magazines including Company, Grazia, Cosmopolitan, Bliss, Glamour, Now, Stylist and Closer, and National Governing Bodies of Sports most popular with women

121 DCMS ([WAS0037](#)), para 33

122 DCMS ([WAS0037](#)), para 40

123 NUJ ([WAS0019](#)), paras 6–7, 15

124 See Sky's description of its involvement with the promotion of cycling: ([WAS0036](#)), paras 4.4, 5.3–5.4

125 ECB ([WAS0034](#)), para 5.1

126 Q 115

coverage and the sports themselves needed to work harder to make these stories more easily accessible to the media.¹²⁷

85. The RFU's strategy has been to obtain coverage in print, broadcast and social media for the England women's team by using the profile of the men's squad as leverage. It has found that joint press conferences are successful in raising awareness of the women's game, and result in more press coverage than a standalone women's team press conference. England Netball and the LTA have taken a different approach: rather than attempting to get coverage on traditional sports pages, in competition with men's team games, they have worked on media such as women's magazines and the lifestyle press to reach women directly, providing the media with articles which are suitable for the publications. The ECB has also experimented with 'lifestyle' approaches to marketing its sport.¹²⁸

86. England Netball has gone further, by radically changing the 'branding' of the game. It developed its new image utilising several key themes—no action shots of athletes, a soft colour palette, participants' own voices and imagery relevant to each of the ten audiences its consumer research had identified. This was very different from the approach normally taken by sports and was part of an overall strategy to attract both the right audiences and potential sponsors and the media.¹²⁹

87. England Netball has also actively used social media, increasing its reach by 20% year on year. It is currently the most followed netball twitter feed in the world. In this, it has been assisted by its programme of training netball teams drawn from the staff of *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan*, who, it says: "blog/tweet about netball endlessly."¹³⁰ The ECB acted as 'broadcaster' for a women's Ashes one day international in August 2013, streaming the match live online and enabling it to be simultaneously broadcast on a number of other websites, including those of several national newspapers.¹³¹

88. Some of our witnesses considered that women's sport was not fully exploiting the opportunities provided by social media,¹³² but England Netball was not alone in seeing the potential. BT told us it was: "working with a number of outlets like Mumsnet, the online parenting network, to pull in a potentially vast new audience. They are not necessarily women themselves but those interested in wider women's issues."¹³³

89. The Sports Journalists Association concludes: "Nothing in Britain will supplant men's football, particularly the English Premier League."¹³⁴ This is probably true, but the evidence we received pointed to a number of initiatives taken by some sporting organisations to maximise media coverage of women's sport that ought to provide inspiration to others.

127 See, for example, Qq 143–144 (NUJ and Sports Journalists' Association)

128 Qq 180–181 and 214, RFU ([WAS0029](#)), para 2.6, England Netball ([WAS0011](#)), paras 17–19, LTA ([WAS0012](#)), para 35 and ECB ([WAS0034](#)), para 5

129 Q 214 England Netball ([WAS0011](#)), para 24

130 England Netball ([WAS0011](#)), para 21

131 ([WAS0034](#)), case studies 5 and 6

132 WSFF ([WAS0031](#)), para 36 and Chrissie Wellington ([WAS0024](#)) and Q84 (Joanne Herbertson)

133 ([WAS0025](#)), para 10

134 ([WAS0014](#)), para 36

90. However, it is not enough just to besiege the media with demands for more coverage. Sports are in competition for airtime and column inches, and need to understand the factors that make sporting events more attractive to broadcasters and newspapers.

Enhancing the value of women's sport to the media and sponsors

91. Our witnesses agreed that, ultimately, whether the media profile of women's sport is enhanced will be a commercial decision, taking into account the impact that the quality of the sport, venue, timing and size of the audience has on a potential sponsor's decision to offer funding, as well as on a broadcaster's willingness to increase its media coverage.¹³⁵

92. A number of our witnesses suggested that rights holders, commercial partners and media organisations needed to invest more effort and resource in ensuring a full calendar of women's sports events were staged and marketed to a high standard.¹³⁶ Several suggested that scheduling cannily, such as holding women's races/events alongside men's events, could increase coverage significantly.¹³⁷ Amy Lawrence, of the *Observer*, suggested linking women's sporting events to their male equivalents, pointing out that at Wimbledon, a day at centre court can mean a game or two of both men's and women's tennis. She said she would love to see a women's football game played either immediately before or immediately after a Premier League game. "The crowds would not be massive but some of the crowd who come early/stay late can see the women's game and begin to develop a stronger bond with it."¹³⁸ From next year, the women's Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race will be held on the same day as the men's, over a tidal course.¹³⁹ In cricket, women's international Twenty20 fixtures are played immediately before the men's match.¹⁴⁰ Other approaches can also be beneficial. The FA told us that the Women's Super League now played a summer league partly to ensure that ground clashes were no longer an issue and partly to provide a summer alternative which had less competition from other forms of football for fans, sponsors and broadcasters alike. It commented: "This has proved successful ... and the quality of the product and the coverage it receives continue to grow."¹⁴¹

93. Chrissie Wellington believed that the quantity and quality of coverage of women's sport could be improved if sports governing bodies acquired the entire broadcasting rights to events and races, with the ability to sell those rights exclusively to one broadcaster for the entire series. This, she suggested, would increase the commercial appeal of rights to broadcasters and also help to create coherence and consistency in the promotion, packaging and presentation of the sport.¹⁴² She and others also commented on the role

135 DCMS ([WAS0037](#)), paras 35–37. See the 'virtuous circle of sporting development' in Channel 4 ([WAS0028](#)). Also Qq124 and 242

136 See WSFF ([WAS0031](#)), para 43 and Recommendation Q, Q 129 (BBC)

137 Chrissie Wellington ([WAS0024](#))

138 NUJ ([WAS0019](#)) The FA admitted that it did not encourage all Premier League clubs to give their women's team access to their stadia for matches if the attendance was likely to appear sparse, as this was unappealing to broadcasters: Qq 186–188

139 Q21 (WSFF)

140 ([WAS0034](#)), paras 1 and 4.2

141 FA ([WAS0030](#)), para 8 and Q 189

142 Chrissie Wellington ([WAS0024](#))

played by sports presenters. The DCMS suggested that top sports presentation at London 2012 showcased minority sports in a far more engaging and informative light than usual.¹⁴³ Sport England considered that one of the reasons for the success of netball in Australia was that it had built the profile of its top players and teams so that it had become “almost a national institution”, with the public being aware of characters and following team rivalries.¹⁴⁴

94. Again, some sports (netball, for example) appear to be thinking more creatively than others about providing the media with attractive and easy ways to present their sport.¹⁴⁵ Rugby is beginning to respond: some women’s matches take place just before or after men’s matches.¹⁴⁶ Recently, a contract has been signed with the BBC to show both the men’s and the women’s Oxford and Cambridge Boat Races from 2015 until 2021. It is a matter of spreading best practice amongst the sport governing bodies.

Women journalists

95. The NUJ believed that the media could play a vital role in increasing women's participation in sport and the sports industry, but first it needed to get its own house in order. Its concerns focused on two issues: the continuing scarcity of women journalists, and the way some newspapers portrayed women's sport. Broadcasters were thought to employ a higher proportion of women than the print media. The *Mail on Sunday* was considered to be an exception because of its appointment of Alison Kervin as the first ever female sports editor of a national newspaper.¹⁴⁷ The NUJ argued that the “briefest of flicks through the back pages of newspapers will show a dearth of women reporting or photographing sport and virtually no coverage of women's sporting events. This partially reflects the situation in national papers, where the majority of bylines belong to men.” It added: “it seems that you are more likely to see a female reporter on the frontline of a war than the touchline of a football or rugby match.”¹⁴⁸

96. Sky considered it important to employ women presenters and reporters, saying:

Having female presenters and sportswomen as part of the team telling the story is an important aspect in making all sport relevant and more engaging to female viewers. Seeing knowledgeable women presenting and commenting on all types of sport sends a positive message that sport is very much a mainstream interest and pursuit for women. As a broadcaster, it also makes sense to use the best talent able to talk expertly and passionately about sport.¹⁴⁹

97. All four broadcasters listed for us their teams of female presenters, reporters and pundits, and provided evidence that women have moved into senior director and editorial

143 Ibid and DCMS ([WAS0037](#)), para 37

144 Qq 243–244

145 See, for example, Q 128

146 Q181

147 Q 138 SJA ([WAS0014](#)), para 29

148 NUJ ([WAS0019](#)), para 8

149 ([WAS0036](#)), para 3.1

roles.¹⁵⁰ The BBC has also recently launched a trainee scheme to provide employment opportunities for female sports journalists.

98. The Sport Journalists' Association argued that the situation regarding women sports journalists had improved dramatically in the last 40 years, stating that until the 1970s it was unthinkable that a woman journalist would report on men's sport, but since then, the number—and degree of acceptance—of female sports journalists, both print and broadcast, has continued to grow. Amy Lawrence, one of the Press Gazette's list of top 50 sports journalists in 2012, said that she felt comfortable in her job, and most people judged her on the standard of her work rather than her gender.¹⁵¹

99. However, as the NUJ pointed out, of the Press Gazette's top 50 sport journalists in 2012, only two were women; the current membership of the Football Writers' Association is thought to be 4% female; and there has never been a woman chief football correspondent.¹⁵² Andy Cairns of BskyB noted in December 2013 that only 18% of that year's students for sports journalism were women.¹⁵³

100. The Sports Journalists' Association told us that Sue Mott, a pioneer women sports journalist who was employed by the *Sunday Times* in the 1980s, believed the main factors inhibiting more women from becoming sports journalists were not only the malign influence of school sport in reducing women's interest in the area, but also the competitive nature of the industry and the difficulty of combining family life with travelling to cover major sporting events.¹⁵⁴ However, the latter two factors are common to a number of professions.

101. The issue of the number and prominence of women journalists and broadcasters should be irrelevant to the issue of how women's sport should be promoted. After all, the ultimate aim is for it to be considered completely normal for journalists of both genders to comment on both men's and women's sport. However, a number of women have made the breakthrough into being considered simply experts, and we hope that their achievements inspire others.

Finance, including sponsorship and prize money

102. Our witnesses were in agreement that women's sport was significantly underfunded in comparison with men's. Sports governing bodies vary in their ability to access government funds and attract commercial sponsorship from broadcasters or other sources, and this affects their ability to support grassroots sporting activity, training for the elite and future elite players, and prize money.

150 BBC ([WAS0003](#)), paras 21–25, BT ([WAS0025](#)), paras 10–12, Channel 4 ([WAS0028](#)) and Sky ([WAS0036](#)), paras 3.2–3.4

151 NUJ ([WAS0019](#))

152 NUJ ([WAS0019](#)), para 3. The Sports Journalists' Association also reported that, although 10% of its members were women, less than half of these were working as journalists, rather than in PR or other fields: Q 134.

153 Q117

154 ([WAS0014](#)), paras 11 and 17–18

Grants from public sources

103. Public funding for sports is the responsibility of two bodies: UK Sport, which funds elite athletes, and Sport England, whose remit is to increase participation in sport at the grass roots level.

104. Through its World Class Performance Programme, UK Sport invests in Olympic and Paralympic sports which demonstrate that they have athletes with the potential to win medals over the next two Olympic/Paralympic cycles. Over 1,300 of the nation's leading athletes who are believed to have the potential to win medals at the next two Olympiads benefit from an annual investment of around £100 million, and UK Sport also supports many more identified as having the potential to compete at world class level with the help of targeted investment. We were told that 43% of the 1,400 athletes funded by UK Sport are women, which correlates to the percentage of medals for women at Olympic and Paralympic games.¹⁵⁵ UK Sport is funded by a mixture of Government Exchequer and Lottery income.

105. Because UK Sport invests in medal potential it does not necessarily fund both male and female athletes within an individual sport. In making investment decisions for Rio 2016, the UK Sport Board initially approved funding for Women's Goalball, Women's Water Polo and Women's Beach Volleyball but not the male equivalent as it judged that the women's programmes were most likely to deliver medal success. UK Sport also funded Synchronised Swimming, which is a female only sport with no male equivalent on the Olympic programme.

106. UK Sport subsequently—following its Annual Investment Review at the start of 2014—withdrew funding from Synchronised Swimming, Goalball and Beach Volleyball which it considered had failed to demonstrate realistic medal potential before the 2020 Games. This 'No Compromise' policy of withdrawing funding from 'failing' sports to re-invest in other programmes has been heavily criticised but has the support of the Government since at least some of the UK's success in winning medals in 2012 was attributed to this approach.¹⁵⁶

107. As a non-Olympic sport, netball does not qualify for funding or specialist support from UK Sport for its elite players, though it does receive funds for them from Sport England. Similarly, the RFU does not receive any public funding from UK Sport to support the elite women's programme but does from Sport England. England Netball considered itself disadvantaged by not being able to access the specialist support provided by UK Sport: "We are competing against Australia and New Zealand where women's sport, including Netball has greater status and support."¹⁵⁷

108. Chrissie Wellington argued that public funding should be directed towards developing athletes, to enable them to train full time and to receive the support they needed, more than towards the existing elite. She suggested that government funding to elite athletes and teams could be conditional upon participation in grassroots programmes. She also advocated means-testing to ensure that athletes with lucrative commercial

¹⁵⁵ Qq 240 and 254–255

¹⁵⁶ 'UK Sport targets investment to protect and enhance medal potential for Rio 2016 and beyond', press notice dated 4 February 2014 from UK Sport

¹⁵⁷ England Netball ([WAS001](#)), para 10 and Q231

partnerships did not receive government funding which could be better spent on development athletes.¹⁵⁸

109. Sport England provides support for over 100 sports in a variety of ways: through advice, the provision of services and funding. It seeks to increase women's participation in sport in three ways:

- a) Through investment in National Governing Body Whole Sport Plans. These plans set out agreed targets for increasing the number of people who play the sport regularly;
- b) Through multi-sport projects aimed at particular groups of women and girls, for example the Us Girls project with women under 25 in deprived areas;
- c) To create an environment “where the norms of women's experience of sport—ie that it is less usual, less expected and less catered for than men's participation—are reversed” through the Bury project.

Sport England also invests in the development of talented athletes in 43 sports, and funds the elite programmes of netball, squash and women's rugby.

110. Sport England has said it will invest £493 million (almost half its funds) into 46 National Governing Bodies for the period 2013-2017 following assessment of their Whole Sport Plans. Within this total, significant funding has been awarded to a number of sports popular amongst women, for example netball (£25.3m), running (£22m), equestrianism (£6m), swimming (£20m) and tennis (£17.4m). To be eligible for such funding, NGBs had to fulfil one of two criteria:

- To have been in receipt of similar investment in the 2009–13 round (in order to build on previous investment); or
- To be a governing body of a sport with more than 75,000 people in England taking part once a week (as these sports are thought to present the best opportunity to increase and sustain regular participation).

111. Like UK Sport, Sport England has recently reviewed its support to ensure that it is directed at those sports most likely to help in achieving its aims. Early in 2014 Sport England announced its unwillingness to maintain a long-term commitment to the NGBs for basketball and swimming and it made a small cut in the grant for tennis, on the grounds of these NGBs' disappointing performance in increasing participation. Sport England assured us that the money held back from the NGBs would not be lost to the sport, but would be distributed to other providers such as local authorities, community groups, charities and associated governing bodies, and to support facilities such as swimming pools and parkruns.¹⁵⁹ The Payment for Results Review, the outcome of which was announced on 27 March 2014, withdrew a total of £2.8 million of funding, representing up to 10% of their grant, from six sports governing bodies.¹⁶⁰ Three other NGBs¹⁶¹ failed to show growth but were considered to have adopted the right approach to encourage people to play their sport, so they were warned that they must deliver growth by December 2014

158 [\(WAS0024\)](#)

159 Qq 259-260, 263-264 and 289

160 Representing football, golf, hockey, mountaineering, netball and rowing

161 Representing badminton, cricket and rugby union

or lose money in 2015; and it was noted that UK Athletics had not achieved its growth target but had, nevertheless, increased the number of people participating, so its grant was not reduced.¹⁶²

112. We comment in more detail on the performance of different NGBs in the next chapter of this Report. As far as the two government agencies are concerned, we commend their rigorous and evidence-based approach to the award of scarce resources to sporting bodies. Some have argued that UK Sport should focus less on Olympic medal potential, and more on an assessment of whether the UK is able to compete at world-class level, not least as some major sports are not represented in the Olympics and the list of Olympic sports varies from Games to Games. However, a medal count is at least a transparent criterion. We are pleased that Sport England is seeking to continue to support the sports and those who play them, even if funding is being taken from the relevant NGB. As we have indicated throughout this report, NGBs vary widely in the degree to which they engage with the problem of increasing participation, and it may well be that local organisations are sometimes better placed than NGBs to invest imaginatively to increase participation.

Commercial Sponsorship

113. In 2011, the WSFF found that, just a year before the Olympics, women's sport received only 0.5% of all UK sports sponsorship; men's sport received 61.1% and the rest went to mixed sports.¹⁶³ The WSFF reported to the Committee that, though it expected a small increase post-Olympics, it believed that commercial investment still “completely fails to reflect the true value of the market”, despite the fact that the UK's leading sportswomen regularly outperform their male counterparts on the international stage, the best women's events enjoy large television audiences and sports fans have shown a desire to watch and engage with women's sport.¹⁶⁴

114. The overwhelming disparity partly reflects the disproportionate ‘slice’ of commercial sponsorship taken by the Premier League. Much of the remaining money goes to Formula 1, rugby, cricket, golf and tennis. Investec's sponsorship of GB/England women's hockey is a rare exception and—according to BT—is partly the result of a senior executive's personal commitment to the game.¹⁶⁵ A relatively new sport, triathlon, provides the same prize money, commercial sponsorship and media opportunities for men as women, as men and women frequently compete in the same race.¹⁶⁶

115. Tennis is the only widely played sport in which the women's game attracts almost as much commercial sponsorship as the men's. BT suggested that this is because it is a popular worldwide sport where the athletes are visible and known; there are four Grand Slams a year that focus attention on female players; and Billie Jean King started to battle

162 'Sport England continues tough approach to sport delivery', press notice dated 27 March 2014

163 WSFF report *Big Deal*, 2011

164 (WAS0031), para 41

165 (WAS0025), para 4 See also Q21 (WSFF)

166 Qq 68–69

for equal prize money in the 1970s where many other sports are only now beginning that fight.¹⁶⁷ BT added:

“Where tennis has been, BT hopes that other women’s sports can follow with the rise in their media coverage. Sponsorship can help with this; sponsors want attention, association and kudos. When women’s sport is shown more widely and often on TV...., women will cease to be peripheral figures in the sports market and come closer to sharing the centre ground with men.”¹⁶⁸

116. Sky believed that partnerships between broadcasters and sporting bodies provided “not just the opportunity to grow sports using funding derived from sports rights, but [for broadcasters and governing bodies to work] together to promote a sport.” Sky cited as examples its support for women’s cricket, its partnership with British Cycling, supporting female as well as male elite cyclists, and its work with women’s golf.¹⁶⁹

117. Amy Lawrence, deputy football correspondent of the *Observer*, suspected possible sponsors and advertisers were lagging behind in willingness to take women’s sport seriously: “I don’t know how much determination there is to market specifically to female sports enthusiasts from big companies and promoters. Certain broadcasters and papers are keen, but I sense they find it hard to make the kind of breakthrough they’d like.”¹⁷⁰

118. The FA noted that, while women’s football is not a professional sport in England, as both the quality and coverage of the elite game have improved, so has interest in the game from supporters and, correspondingly, from potential sponsors. The FA was particularly keen to work with partners who become closely involved in its grassroots work, and it referred to four companies as part of its full women’s partner programme: Nike, Vauxhall, Continental and BT Sport.¹⁷¹ It was hoping that this programme would grow and generate increasing revenues for the women’s game, to enable it eventually to become professional.¹⁷² Both the ECB and the RFU told us that they did not separate sponsorship of women’s and men’s programmes, and that many of their sponsorship agreements contained rights related to both the men’s and women’s programmes: for example, for rugby union O2 sponsored both the men’s and women’s senior 15s, and Canterbury¹⁷³ provided kit for both men’s and women’s teams, and for cricket Waitrose was the main team sponsor and adidas provided the kit for both men and women.¹⁷⁴ England Netball reported on its commercial strategy to increase the share of income it received from sponsorship, merchandise, events, working with commercial providers and membership offers. It had negotiated a television contract with Sky, and was hoping to sign contracts with other sponsors, and it suggested that one of its attractions was its understanding of and responsiveness to its customer base, netball supporters and grassroots players. Even so, it

167 Qq 205–207 (LTA) and BT ([WAS0025](#)), para 7. See LTA ([WAS0012](#)), paras 15–18 for a list of its sponsors and prize money

168 BT ([WAS0025](#)), para 8

169 Sky ([WAS0036](#)), paras 4.1–4.2 and 4.4, and Q 227

170 NUJ ([WAS0019](#))

171 FA ([WAS0030](#)), paras 17–18

172 Qq 197–199

173 Canterbury is a sports clothing company based in New Zealand.

174 RFU ([WAS0029](#)), paras 3.1–3.2 and Q 179, ECB ([WAS0034](#)), para 5

said that the value of its sponsorships was far below the levels of professional male sport.¹⁷⁵

119. Some of our witnesses suggested that women’s sport offers some special advantages to potential sponsors: it is an underexploited area, with extensive rights available at a comparatively low cost; its quality has never been higher; it provides an opportunity for distinctive commercial marketing—appealing to both male and female consumers and brands—as well as demonstrating corporate social responsibility by working in a developing area.¹⁷⁶ However, rights holders (such as the sports governing bodies) need to make strong business cases to encourage commercial investment in women’s sport.

120. The WSFF emphasised the need to grow the fan base for particular events within women’s sport to attract more commercial sponsorship. Some sports appeared to be better at developing a fan base than others: we were told that audience numbers at live netball matches had increased and it was one of the few female sports to sell out arenas with full price tickets. England Netball attributed this to its active targeting of women and girls as its preferred audience. In tennis, the LTA introduced a Ladies Day for the Aegon tournament in 2012 to help raise the profile of the sport amongst women and encourage attendance at the event; the day was sold out in both 2012 and 2013.¹⁷⁷

121. The WSFF believed there were opportunities to market women’s sport in slightly different ways to make it appealing to teenage girls and women who may not previously have considered themselves to be fans of that sport. Both of these potential new markets would increase the attractiveness of sponsorship to commercial partners. To assist this development, the WSFF suggested that the Government should consider ring-fencing some of its investment into particular sports in order to provide “seed-funding” to emerging and developing competitions and give an incentive to commercial investment. This, it argued, was the model that had helped netball in Australia develop from a mainly amateur, low-profile sport twenty years ago into a professional sport where the top players were household names and the domestic league was a commercially self-sustaining business.¹⁷⁸

Training and scholarships

122. None of the team sports from whose governing bodies we took oral evidence—football, rugby union, netball—was professional sports for women. This meant that they were heavily dependent on government grants, players’ willingness to support themselves and cross-subsidy from the men’s sport to support not only existing elite players but also the training of future elite players. Overall, there is a shortage of money for both men’s and women’s sport, and sometimes there appears to be a bias towards male sports. For example, GB Volleyball had so little funding before the 2012 Games that it chose to support only the men’s team, leaving the women’s team unfunded—yet it was the women’s team that achieved a significant victory, while the men’s team lost all of its

175 England Netball ([WAS0011](#)), paras 11–14

176 ([WAS0031](#)), paras 41–42 and Chrissie Wellington ([WAS0024](#))

177 WSFF ([WAS0031](#)), para 43, England Netball ([WAS0011](#)), para 15, LTA ([WAS0012](#)), para 19

178 WSFF ([WAS0031](#)), para 43. See also Qq73–74

matches. The funding decision caused considerable difficulties to the women players, one of whom incurred debts of £10,000 just to play in the Olympics.¹⁷⁹

123. The RFU invested approximately £2.5 million on women's elite rugby in 2012, including on talent identification and development. While lower than the investment in the men's elite programme, in part that is attributable to the fact that the RFU had to pay release fees from Premiership clubs for the men.¹⁸⁰ The RFU claimed that the women's 7s programme was well funded, and the 15s programme was "one of the best resourced in the world", allowing England to compete at the top level.¹⁸¹ The RFU has recently instituted an Elite Player agreement for the women's players which, like that for the men's, sets out the support from the Union in areas such as training and medical cover.¹⁸² The ECB described its programmes for women, and the access women cricketers have to specialist coaching, medical screening and bespoke fitness programmes.¹⁸³ The FA told us it was creating an Elite Performance Unit for the women's game to oversee the development of the best young players.¹⁸⁴ Elite netball players receive only a financial contribution to their training and travel costs.¹⁸⁵

124. Some commercial sponsorship for training young players is available, for example through the Sky Sports Scholarships scheme which offers financial support, media training and mentoring. In August 2013 Sky announced the latest 12 scholarships which included seven women representing a range of sports.¹⁸⁶

Prize money

125. Another area of inequality in sport is the prize money available to women and men. Prize money is not offered for any global or domestic netball competition. We were told that there were not even trophies available for the women's cricket league and football league.¹⁸⁷

126. It has often been argued that men's sport is both more challenging and more interesting than women's, so the differential is justified. However, a number of sportswomen are challenging the assumption that women cannot compete on equal terms with men and, therefore, should not receive an equal reward. Chrissie Wellington has suggested that discriminatory rules that, for example, restrict the length and duration of races for women, should be evaluated and potentially abolished because they are not substantiated by evidence from respected sports physiologists.¹⁸⁸ A major campaign to get a women's Tour de France alongside the men's event in future is being led by Emma Pooley and Chrissie Wellington. A petition in support has reached the 100,000 signature

179 BT ([WAS0025](#)), para 5

180 RFU ([WAS0029](#)), para 1.3

181 *Ibid.*

182 RFU ([WAS0029](#)), para 3.3. See also Qq 176-177

183 ([WAS0034](#)), section 4

184 FA ([WAS0030](#)), para 14. The Unit consists of 29 new Player Development Centres, 31 FA Girls' Centres of Excellence and 3 Elite Performance Camps

185 England Netball ([WAS0011](#)), para 16

186 Sky ([WAS0036](#)), para 4.5

187 Joanne Herbertson ([WAS0015](#))

188 Chrissie Wellington ([WAS0024](#))

mark.¹⁸⁹ Chrissie Wellington argued that race owners could consider increasing prize purses for female athletes (giving parity with men), to enable them more easily to make a living.

127. Meanwhile, equal prize money for men and women was first introduced at the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in 2007, and the Aegon Classic (a women only tournament) was upgraded to a WTA Premier 600 event from 2013, with a resulting increase in prize money for participants.

128. The fact that fans of women’s sport are currently a market comparatively underexploited by commercial sponsors, and that female sports fans offer opportunities for new sponsors to become involved, should inspire sports governing bodies to offer imaginative deals to companies. Greater coverage of women’s sport in the media should increase the audience for such sport, and enhance the attraction of sponsorship.

129. While no one is arguing for all elite sportspeople to receive the same pay or investment in training as premiership footballers, the gap between the support and rewards received by those men and almost all professional/elite sportswomen is vast. It would enhance the respect in which women’s sport is held for women to be better supported financially; and it is likely that better pay would enable more high quality women to continue to play sport and to develop their potential.

Role models

Leadership of sport governing bodies

130. Our Terms of Reference for this inquiry did not include a specific reference to women as leaders and members of the sports workforce, but a number of those giving oral evidence pointed to the gender imbalance amongst sports governing bodies, managers and coaches, and the degree to which women in leadership roles in sport were still subject to overt, as well as covert, sexism. The WSFF went so far as to say: “the lack of women in senior decision making roles within sport is a major issue preventing women’s sport from reaching its potential.”¹⁹⁰

131. In 2006, our predecessors noted that there was not one woman on the FA Board and that there was only one female member of the 90-strong FA Council, and concluded: “The FA should demonstrate that it recognises the value of drawing women into governance and promoting female role models as a way of increasing recognition and widening the fan base, thereby benefiting the sport as a whole.”¹⁹¹

132. In 2012 UK Sport and Sport England asked all publicly-funded sports’ National Governing Bodies to have women as at least 25% of their board members by 2017. The latest figures (from May 2014)¹⁹² show:

¹⁸⁹ Qq 203–204

¹⁹⁰ ([WAS0031](#)), para 22

¹⁹¹ Culture Media and Sport Committee, *Women’s Football*, Fourth Report of Session 2005–06, HC 1357, paragraph 29

¹⁹² WSFF’s *Trophy Women?* Report 2014

- 22 out of 45 NGB boards funded by Sport England and UK Sport do not meet the 25% minimum expectation¹⁹³
- In 2009, 21% of board members were women. This had risen to 22% in the 2011/12 report and 27% in 2013/14
- The number of women in the most senior positions remains low: an average of 21% of the four senior roles surveyed are held by women

The Government considers that more needs to be done to ensure there are no barriers to women in the rise to Senior Management and Executive Director level, and it has given a Women and Sport Advisory Board the task of addressing this, amongst other, issues.¹⁹⁴

133. Several sports governing bodies told us that they were keen to increase the number of women in senior roles.¹⁹⁵ Sport England said it was drawing together a pool of high calibre individuals who had expressed an interest in being on NGB boards, and highlighting advertised positions to those individuals.¹⁹⁶ Chrissie Wellington suggested more work was needed to find out why women were not rising up the ranks of sports administration.¹⁹⁷

134. The WSFF argued that the lack of representation of women on the UK's sports boards meant that sports were missing out on the benefits that diverse leadership teams could bring, and made it less likely that sporting bodies fully understood how best to approach women's sport in all aspects of their business including participation, sponsorship and media profile.¹⁹⁸ It recommended that the 25% minimum expectation in relation to female board membership by 2017 should be raised to 30%, and that experienced and appropriate women from outside sport should be supported into leadership positions in the sector.

135. Having more women in senior management and board posts is not an end in itself: it may serve to increase understanding of women's views and needs at the levels where decisions on the future strategies of sports are made, and it also helps the image of sport in general to become less masculine. We welcome the progress that has been made in opening leadership positions in sport to women but note that some sports have made more progress than others. We particularly regret the fact that popular sports like swimming and tennis are lagging badly behind, and that the FA

193 Three NGBs have no women on their boards (British Cycling, British Wheelchair Rugby and British Wrestling), another five have 10% or fewer (the Angling Trust, the FA, Pentathlon GB, the Lawn Tennis Association and Amateur Swimming Association), eleven have 20% or less (England and Wales Cricket Board, Snowsport England, British Judo, Goalball UK, the Rugby Football League, British Canoe Union, British Shooting, Archery GB, Badminton England, British Orienteering and GB Taekwondo) and three have 22% (British Weightlifting, England Handball and the Royal Yachting Association). Figures for the Rugby Football Union and Amateur Boxing Association were not available.

194 DCMS ([WAS0037](#)), paras 45–48

195 See, for example, British Cycling ([WAS0007](#)), para 30 and the RFU ([WAS0029](#)), para 5.5

196 Sport England ([WAS0039](#)), para 50

197 Q82

198 ([WAS0031](#)), para 23

appears to have made little progress in this regard since our predecessors' report in 2006.

Coaches

136. As already highlighted, boys and girls prefer different styles of coaching, and research by the WSFF shows that the traditional style of male sports coach is actually off-putting to women contemplating participating in grassroots sport.¹⁹⁹

137. BT spoke for many of our witnesses in saying:

At this time, women represent only 18% of the qualified coach force in the UK. Yet if you listen to many of our great athletes like Olympians Gail Emms, Kate Walsh, and Victoria Pendleton, the complete absence of female coaches in their respective fields was both an obstacle at performance level and a hindrance to recruiting female athletes in general. So coaching is a very, very important area.²⁰⁰

138. Only 17% of qualified coaches (1st for Sport Qualifications), and only 31% of coaches overall are women, despite the fact that women are more likely than men to use coaching (30% in comparison to 25%).²⁰¹ The proportion varies among sports, with gymnastics, swimming, equestrian, netball and tennis having higher proportions of women coaches than average. Both UK Sport and Sport England considered the shortage of female coaches a serious problem. UK Sport expressed frustration that so few elite sportswomen became coaches. While acknowledging that elite coaching was a difficult role for women with caring responsibilities because of the travelling involved, UK Sport suggested that one cause of the shortage was the fact that the apprenticeship programme depended on the nomination of trainees by head coaches, almost all of whom were male and who tended to nominate in their own image.²⁰² Gwenda Ward, an ex-Olympic athlete and Level 2 athletics coach, criticised her sport for unthinking adherence to traditional recruitment practices, resulting in a failure to develop female coaches.²⁰³

139. Joanne Herbertson offered insight into the difficulties faced by female coaches as a coach in a variety of sports herself. While commenting generally that very few women's sports jobs were well paid or offered flexible working conditions, she argued that women felt isolated (she cited training courses where she had been the only female participant)²⁰⁴ and that the long hours and dedication required of volunteers made it difficult for those with other work and family responsibilities to take part. She also reported that she had faced patronising and sometimes downright hostile behaviour by male coaches and female players, who seemed to consider her as having less authority because she was a woman.²⁰⁵

199 WSFF ([WAS0031](#)), para 24. See also Diana Egerton-Warburton ([WAS0022](#)), para 3

200 BT ([WAS0025](#)), para 3 See also WSFF ([WAS0031](#)), para 24 and Joanne Herbertson ([WAS0015](#)), British Cycling ([WAS0007](#)), para 29

201 Research by Sport England, cited in ([WAS0039](#)), para 51

202 Qq 247-248

203 ([WAS0006](#))

204 See also Q44 (MWSF)

205 Ref ([WAS0015](#))

140. Sport England wants to see more women getting involved in coaching. This is one of the targets in its UK Coaching Framework, which has been adopted by all five sports councils, and in the terms of its partnership with a body called Sports Coach UK. In partnership with the WSFF, Sports Coach UK has completed a research project on the experiences of coaching among high performing female athletes and has initiated a project to encourage more women into coaching. Following a regional pilot in the south-east in 2013, this was due to be rolled out nationally from 2014, with the target of recruiting 5000 women as coaches. Recognising that time constraints can be a barrier to becoming qualified, the training is to be provided in a more flexible way than previously, including e-learning modules.²⁰⁶

141. Individual sports are also responding to the need to recruit more women coaches. We were told that Sky Sports and the England and Wales Cricket Board had jointly launched a coach education programme in 2006, since when over 50,000 coaching certificates had been awarded, “a large number” of which have been awarded to female coaches. The ECB said the number of female cricket coaches had grown from 556 in 2003 to 2,756 in 2013.²⁰⁷ The LTA has also undertaken research to understand, and address, the current imbalance between female and male coaches in tennis, including a comprehensive review of current coaches, focus group sessions, and programmes of mentoring with established female coaches.²⁰⁸ The RFU found female-only training courses for coaches were not successful so had instead placed the emphasis on more friendly and supportive mixed courses.²⁰⁹

142. Many of our witnesses argued that women would be encouraged to take part, and persist, in sport were there more female coaches. The sporting authorities are trying to encourage more women to become involved in coaching. However, low pay and long and inflexible hours are not attractive—though many clearly find great enjoyment and reward in teaching and helping others. While the poor conditions are common to both male and female coaches, and there is only limited scope for sport governing bodies to change them, it is very unlikely that the sexism and lack of respect displayed to Joanne Herbertson would be experienced by a male coach, and it is very disappointing that some of this behaviour was shown by fellow coaches. If sport governing bodies are serious about encouraging greater participation by women, then they must take action to drive this sort of behaviour out of their sports.

206 Sport England ([WAS0039](#)), para 54 Q 283 For another example of the adaptation of training of coaches to make it more accessible to those with other jobs or caring duties, see Q72

207 ([WAS0034](#)), para 3.1

208 LTA ([WAS0012](#)), para 38. This approach was also advocated by Chrissie Wellington: Q73

209 Q195

4 Sport governing bodies

143. Throughout this Report, we have made numerous references to sport governing bodies or NGBs. This is because they form the main conduit through which public money is channelled to individual sports, they provide the strategy and targets for their sports, they handle issues such as commercial partnership and promotion, and they are the central organisations to which local sports clubs look for money, guidance and support.

144. As mentioned earlier, Sport England is investing £100 million a year through 46 NGBs. This investment is focused on four development areas set out in each sport's Whole Sport Plan (WSP), three of which involve increased participation by specified groups. There is no specific target for participation by women and girls.

145. Sport England told us that there were some shining examples of NGBs who had succeeded in growing participation by women in their sport. In its written evidence to us last autumn, it said netball was one of the star performers and athletics had shown a healthy growth among women due to the running boom. It also singled out for comment boxing which, thanks in part to the Nicola Adams's success, had seen a rise in participation of more than 50% in the previous year.²¹⁰ However, sustaining this performance over time has proved difficult. As previously described, the 2014 Payment for Results Review withdrew funding from six sports governing bodies for failing to meet their targets (The Football Association, England Golf Partnership, England Hockey, British Mountaineering Council, England Netball and British Rowing), and gave warnings of possible future cuts in grant to three others (Badminton England, the England and Wales Cricket Board, and Rugby Football Union), which had failed to show growth but were considered to be doing the right things to encourage people to play their sport. UK Athletics, despite its initial success, had not achieved its growth target but had, nevertheless, increased the number of people participating, so its grant was not reduced. The British Equestrian Federation was also encouraged to work harder on increasing adult (26 years and over) participation in the sport, and to form a partnership with the British Horse Society to achieve this.²¹¹

146. Sport England commented that many of the NGBs' programmes for women and girls "take a traditional approach and are based on an adaptation of the male offer. This is one of the main reasons why we have engaged with a wider range of partners in this area, including StreetGames and a number of women's organisations." The money being withdrawn from the NGBs under this year's review is to be reinvested in the same sports through local authorities or charities.²¹²

147. Judging from the written and oral evidence we received, NGBs vary widely in their strengths and weaknesses. In general, the more traditional team sports appear to have more to do to adapt to meet the needs of women: the football authorities, in particular, have been slow to do more than promote the same products,²¹³ whereas cycling, netball, tennis, badminton, cricket, boxing and even rugby are developing new forms of the sport designed

210 Sport England ([WAS0039](#)), para 26. Q2 (WSFF)

211 'Sport England continues tough approach to sport delivery', press notice dated 27 March 2014

212 Sport England ([WAS0039](#)), para 27. See Qq56-57 for examples of different ways in which charities and local organisations act as intermediaries between the NGBs and the local community.

213 Though see Qq52 (StreetGames) and 55 (MWSF)

to encourage women to start playing.²¹⁴ However, women's football has developed significantly in the last 20 years, being now the third most popular team sport for participation after men's football and men's cricket; and both football and cricket have achieved more comprehensive and regular media coverage of the women's game than other sports, and less popular sports like rowing and rugby are displaying considerable enterprise in tying the men's and women's sport together in media or sponsorship packages.

148. Sport England's written evidence to us asked the question: Should we add a specific target for women's participation into WSPs?²¹⁵ It noted that, when the Youth and Community Strategy was created, the Government decided to focus on overall participation, with an emphasis on young people and those with a disability. The rationale for not having further specific targets was twofold: first, it was thought that to achieve an overall target NGBs would have to engage a reasonable cross-section of the adult population as a whole, and therefore groups such as women, BAME groups and those in less advantaged communities would be included in the NGBs' plans as a matter of course; secondly a proliferation of targets would mean NGBs' efforts would be fragmented and less effective overall, and the two chosen were felt to be the priorities at that time.

149. Sport England suggested that the advantages of introducing specific targets for women would include more specific focus on women by many NGBs and a greater acknowledgement of the difference between men's and women's preferences and motivations, and so perhaps a development of more appropriate options for women and girls. In addition to the problem of smaller sports having to divide their efforts between a number of different targets, Sport England said that a disadvantage of having a specific target was the possibility that it would lead to an over-emphasis on high profile sports, such as football and cricket, instead of the sports more popular amongst women, such as swimming and dance. It also noted that changing the rules part-way through the four year funding cycle would cause disruption to existing plans. Sport England suggested that some of the risks would be mitigated if additional targets were imposed only on those NGBs where there was potential for significant growth in women's participation which was not being addressed.²¹⁶ We asked whether a target for women might also lead NGBs to concentrate on easy-to-recruit women, ignoring the specific needs of those harder to reach like women in poorer households and some ethnic and faith groups. Sport England agreed that this was a risk with a purely number-based target, but thought it could be mitigated by careful wording of the target.²¹⁷

150. We applaud the NGBs that are succeeding in meeting Sport England's criteria for increasing participation. We are pleased that many of the sports that women most enjoy—dance, running, swimming, tennis—are among the 46 sports being specifically supported under the Youth and Community Strategy.

151. We believe that there should be an additional target in the Youth and Community Strategy for increasing the participation of women and girls, but that it

214 See, for example, the written evidence supplied by England Netball ([WAS0011](#)), paras 22–23, the LTA ([WAS0012](#)), paras 27–30 and British Cycling ([WAS0007](#)), paras 20–25 about the detailed research they have done into specific audiences, and see Qq 20 for badminton, 63 for cricket and 277 for boxing and 'boxercise'

215 ([WAS0039](#)), paras 28–29. See also Q 47 (StreetGames)

216 ([WAS0039](#)), paras 30–32 and Q 248

217 Qq 247–248 See also Qq48–49 (MWSF)

should be imposed only on those NGBs that are not seriously addressing the potential for growing women's participation in their sport.

152. We support Sport England's approach of reducing funding to NGBs whose performance is lack-lustre and giving other bodies the opportunity to invest imaginatively in local schemes for boosting participation in their sports. We have been given enough evidence of popular initiatives like park runs and pop up tennis courts to conclude that Sport England should actively seek out further opportunities beyond sport governing bodies to work with whichever groups know best how to reach and engage people locally.

Conclusions

1. The increasing inactivity of children is, and should be, a major concern to the Government, to parents and to society in general, and schools are key to addressing the problem. We recommend that children's activity levels be measured annually, and that best practice amongst a few schools is turned into common practice in relation to encouraging higher levels of overall participation. This will need to include addressing specific problems such as poor facilities. (Paragraph 29)
2. Though there have been initiatives to improve the training of teachers in PE, more needs to be done—at both primary and secondary levels—to ensure that PE staff are equipped to support every child in a wide range of activities. We agree with the Education Committee that the two-year timeframe for the primary sport premium is too short and runs the risk of replicating previous short-term fixes rather than providing a long-term solution to the inadequacy of PE teaching in schools. (Paragraph 30)
3. Girls are being deterred from participating in sport by their experiences in school PE lessons. Unfortunately, an emphasis on competitive sport may make this situation worse for some girls. Schools need to be more imaginative in the type of sport that they provide for girls: while some enjoy team games like football and netball, or athletics, others would enjoy sampling a wider variety of activities, such as dance or cycling, or non-traditional games for girls like rugby. (Paragraph 31)
4. While it is unrealistic to expect schools to provide facilities and coaching for a wide variety of sports, there are good opportunities for sports governing bodies to reach out to potential future players and spectators through forging links between local clubs and schools. While some progress is being made in this area, sports governing bodies need to inject more urgency and enthusiasm into this task, otherwise it is doubtful that they will meet their target of increasing participation in sporting activity by 14–25 year olds. (Paragraph 32)
5. Whatever the reality, there is a perception amongst pupils and others that schools care more about, and spend more money on, sport for boys than for girls. We do not want to add to the bureaucracy on schools, but we consider that the decline in girls' participation in sport is sufficiently serious that schools should be made to focus more attention on the sports offered to girls. This might most easily be done by an amendment to schools' Public Sector Equality Duty, which we consider to be an effective but less heavy-handed alternative to the USA's Title IX legislation. (Paragraph 33)
6. We are very concerned about the lack of communication and co-operation between Government departments, which we think presents a serious obstacle to the DCMS in its attempts to deliver the Olympic legacy. We recommend that the DCMS, Department for Education and Department of Health publish a joint annual report to Parliament on school sport, focusing on participation levels, the availability of different types of sport, partnerships with clubs and charities, and training for teachers. (Paragraph 35)
7. We recognise that some progress has been made since 2005, but we are concerned about the persistently low rates of participation in sport by women and girls. We believe that this issue should be higher on the Government's agenda and, to this end, we recommend that the DCMS and Department for Health publish a joint report

annually, in the wake of the APS statistics, indicating their response to those statistics. (Paragraph 51)

8. Sports providers are experimenting with a number of options designed to meet women's needs for flexible, fun sporting activity. Some of the examples listed above are also low-cost and comparatively easy to organise, requiring only readily-available facilities and little or no specialist equipment. It seems likely, from the success they have achieved so far, that these initiatives will spread through the country. However, parkruns and cycling do not suit everyone, and there remain difficulties in accessing suitable facilities for other types of sport. (Paragraph 50)
9. We look forward to the analysis of the Bury project, which appears to be imaginative and sensitive in adapting provision of sport to women's lives rather than expecting the reverse to take place. We hope that it is successful in sustaining the initial level of interest among women. (Paragraph 49)
10. We are concerned that there are too few facilities to enable people easily to participate in sport. We acknowledge the pressure on local authority budgets, but we fear that a diminution in the number and quality of sporting facilities will simply increase the need for more expensive health and social care interventions in a less fit population, even if one does not take into account the loss to individuals. Provision of some basic facilities—pitches, swimming pools, sports halls—at low cost should be seen as a contribution to public health rather than a leisure programme. (Paragraph 58)
11. We recommend a review of programmes, such as the Community Right to Bid, to enable local people more easily to defend the open spaces and facilities that they value. (Paragraph 59)
12. Schools also have an important role to play in ensuring facilities are available in every community. We acknowledge the pressures on schools because of local authority budget cuts, but nevertheless we were disappointed to learn that some are reluctant to open up their facilities. This should be challenged. Both publicly-funded schools and those which claim charitable status have a duty to serve the local community, and, if they have sports facilities, should be required to report to the local authority, DfE or Charity Commission, as relevant, how they make those facilities available to local people. (Paragraph 60)
13. We understand that the economic situation has severely limited the financial resources that public bodies can apply to the maintenance and improvement of sports facilities, and we acknowledge the attention that at least some sports governing bodies are giving to updating and improving sports grounds and clubs. However, more emphasis should be given to the needs of women, and of different groups of women, in the design and staffing of facilities. (Paragraph 72)
14. In bringing so many dilapidated and outdated facilities up to standard progress is likely to be slow. In the meantime, enterprising people are trying out alternatives to traditional facilities, and we commend all these efforts to bring cheap and accessible sport to people. Sport England is already working with a number of these people, but we recommend that Sport England draw up a strategy to assist them with advice, small grants and to spread best practice, as locally organized, locally promoted sport seems to us the most promising way of increasing participation not only by women but also by men. (Paragraph 73)

15. There are comparatively easy ways in which the media could contribute to reinforcing the view that women's sport is normal and worthy of interest. One example would be for more national newspapers to publish the results of women's matches alongside the men's. Another would be for journalists and commentators to refrain from discussing the appearance of sportswomen and from making derogatory comments about the ability of women in general to play sports. (Paragraph 83)
16. The Sports Journalists Association concludes: "Nothing in Britain will supplant men's football, particularly the English Premier League." This is probably true, but the evidence we received pointed to a number of initiatives taken by some sporting organisations to maximise media coverage of women's sport that ought to provide inspiration to others. (Paragraph 89)
17. However, it is not enough just to besiege the media with demands for more coverage. Sports are in competition for airtime and column inches, and need to understand the factors that make sporting events more attractive to broadcasters and newspapers. It is a matter of spreading best practice amongst the sport governing bodies. (Paragraphs 90 and 94)
18. The issue of the number and prominence of women journalists and broadcasters should be irrelevant to the issue of how women's sport should be promoted. After all, the ultimate aim is for it to be considered completely normal for journalists of both genders to comment on both men's and women's sport. However, a number of women have made the breakthrough into being considered simply experts, and we hope that their achievements inspire others. (Paragraph 101)
19. The fact that fans of women's sport are currently a market comparatively underexploited by commercial sponsors, and that female sports fans offer opportunities for new sponsors to become involved, should inspire sports governing bodies to offer imaginative deals to companies. Greater coverage of women's sport in the media should increase the audience for such sport, and enhance the attraction of sponsorship. (Paragraph 128)
20. While no one is arguing for all elite sportspeople to receive the same pay or investment in training as Premiership footballers, the gap between the support and rewards received by those men and almost all professional/elite sportswomen is vast. It would enhance the respect in which women's sport is held for women to be better supported financially; and it is likely that better pay would enable more high quality women to continue to play sport and to develop their potential. (Paragraph 129)
21. Having more women in senior management and board posts is not an end in itself: it may serve to increase understanding of women's views and needs at the levels where decisions on the future strategies of sports are made, and it also helps the image of sport in general to become less masculine. We welcome the progress that has been made in opening leadership positions in sport to women but note that some sports have made more progress than others. We particularly regret the fact that popular sports like swimming and tennis are lagging badly behind, and that the FA appears to have made little progress in this regard since our predecessors' report in 2006. (Paragraph 135)
22. Many of our witnesses argued that women would be encouraged to take part, and persist, in sport were there more female coaches. The sporting authorities are trying to encourage more women to become involved in coaching. However, low pay and

long and inflexible hours are not attractive—though many clearly find great enjoyment and reward in teaching and helping others. While the poor conditions are common to both male and female coaches, and there is only limited scope for sport governing bodies to change them, it is very unlikely that the sexism and lack of respect displayed to one of our witnesses would be experienced by a male coach, and it is very disappointing that some of this behaviour was shown by fellow coaches. If sport governing bodies are serious about encouraging greater participation by women, then they must take action to drive this sort of behaviour out of their sports. (Paragraph 142)

23. We applaud the NGBs that are succeeding in meeting Sport England’s criteria for increasing participation. We are pleased that many of the sports that women most enjoy—dance, running, swimming, tennis—are among the 46 sports being specifically supported under the Youth and Community Strategy. (Paragraph 150)
24. We believe that there should be an additional target in the Youth and Community Strategy for increasing the participation of women and girls, but that it should be imposed only on those NGBs that are not seriously addressing the potential for growing women’s participation in their sport. (Paragraph 151)
25. We support Sport England’s approach of reducing funding to NGBs whose performance is lack-lustre and giving other bodies the opportunity to invest imaginatively in local schemes for boosting participation in their sports. We have been given enough evidence of popular initiatives like park runs and pop up tennis courts to conclude that Sport England should actively seek out further opportunities beyond sport governing bodies to work with whichever groups know best how to reach and engage people locally. (Paragraph 152)

Formal Minutes

Tuesday 15 July 2014

Members present:

Mr John Whittingdale, in the Chair

Mr Ben Bradshaw
Angie Bray
Conor Burns
Tracey Crouch
Philip Davies

Paul Farrelly
Mr John Leech
Jim Sheridan
Mr Gerry Sutcliffe

Draft Report (*Women and Sport*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

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

Paragraphs 1 to 152 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the First 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.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 22 July at 10.00 am

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the Committee's inquiry page at www.parliament.uk/cmscom

Tuesday 12 November 2013

Question number

Tim Woodhouse, Head of Policy and External Affairs, Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation

[Q1-32](#)

Rimla Akhtar, Muslim Women's Sports Foundation, **Claire Wheeler**, Strategic Lead for Equity, Streetgames, and **Karen Keohane**, National Programme Manager, Streetgames

[Q33-58](#)

Lottie Birdsall-Strong, footballer, **Joanne Herbertson**, football and cricket coach, and **Christine Anne Wellington MBE**, triathlon world champion

[Q59-85](#)

Tuesday 3 December 2013

Barbara Slater, Director of Sport, BBC, **Simon Green**, Head, BT Sport, **Dan Brooke**, Chief Marketing and Communications Manager, Channel 4, and **Andy Cairns**, Executive Editor, Sky Sports News, BskyB

[Q86-131](#)

Andrew Longmore, Sports Journalist, Sunday Times, and **Sarah Juggins**, Treasurer, Sports Journalists' Association,

[Q132-147](#)

Tuesday 10 December 2013

Kelly Simmons, Director of the National Game and Women's Football, Football Association, **Helen Clayton**, former Captain of the England Rugby Team and Project Manager of the Hitz programme, Premiership Rugby, **Alastair Marks**, Head of Rugby Growth and **Nicky Ponsford**, Head of Performance, Women, Rugby Football Union

[Q148-199](#)

Joanna Adams, Director of Marketing and Commercial, England Netball, **Chris Boardman**, Policy Adviser, and **Emma Pooley**, British Cycling, and **Nick Humby**, Chief Operating Officer, Lawn Tennis Association

[Q200-239](#)

Tuesday 4 February 2014

Jennie Price, Chief Executive, Sport England, and **Liz Nicholl OBE**, Chief Executive, UK Sport

[Q240-277](#)

Mrs Helen Grant, MP, Minister for Sport, Tourism and Equalities

[Q278-319](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the Committee's inquiry web page at www.parliament.uk/cmscom. INQ numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Dr Carrie Dunn ([WAS0001](#))
- 2 BBC ([WAS0003](#))
- 3 Lottie Birdsall-Strong ([WAS0005](#))
- 4 Gwenda Ward ([WAS0006](#))
- 5 British Cycling ([WAS0007](#))
- 6 England Golf ([WAS0008](#))
- 7 Women's Sport Trust ([WAS0009](#))
- 8 Streetgames ([WAS0010](#))
- 9 England Netball ([WAS0011](#))
- 10 Lawn Tennis Association ([WAS0012](#))
- 11 Premiership Rugby ([WAS0013](#))
- 12 Sports Journalists' Association ([WAS0014](#))
- 13 Joanne Herbertson ([WAS0015](#))
- 14 National Union Of Journalists ([WAS0019](#))
- 15 Sport And Recreation Alliance ([WAS0020](#))
- 16 Nike, Inc. ([WAS0021](#))
- 17 Diana Egerton-Warburton ([WAS0022](#))
- 18 Muslim Women's Sport Foundation ([WAS0023](#))
- 19 Christine Ann Wellington ([WAS0024](#))
- 20 BT ([WAS0025](#))
- 21 New College Leicester, Learning And Sports Village ([WAS0026](#))
- 22 Youth Sport Trust ([WAS0027](#))
- 23 Channel 4 ([WAS0028](#))
- 24 Rugby Football Union ([WAS0029](#))
- 25 The Football Association ([WAS0030](#)) ([WAS0048](#))
- 26 Women's Sport And Fitness Foundation ([WAS0031](#))
- 27 Scottish Ladies' Golfing Association & Scottish Golf Union ([WAS0032](#))
- 28 Stonewall ([WAS0033](#))
- 29 England And Wales Cricket Board ([WAS0034](#))
- 30 Premier League ([WAS0035](#))
- 31 BSkyB ([WAS0036](#))
- 32 Department for Culture, Media and Sport ([WAS0037](#)) ([WAS0051](#))
- 33 UK Sport ([WAS0038](#))
- 34 Sport England ([WAS0039](#))
- 35 British Horseracing Authority ([WAS0040](#))
- 36 Gender Hub ([WAS0041](#))
- 37 Women's International Boxing Federation ([WAS0042](#))
- 38 Jeremy Fagan ([WAS0043](#))
- 39 Women In Racing ([WAS0044](#))

40 Catriona Cook MBE ([WAS0046](#))

41 The Fiona Oakes Foundation ([WAS0049](#))

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/cmscom

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2012-2013

First Report	The Gambling Act 2005: A bet worth taking?	HC 421
Second Report	Racism in football	HC 89
Third Report	Library Closures	HC 587
Fourth Report	Football Governance Follow-Up	HC 509
Fifth Report	Scrutiny of the Draft Public Bodies (Merger of the Gambling Commission and the National Lottery Commission) Order 2013	HC 1104
Sixth Report	Pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Gambling (Licensing and Advertising) Bill	HC 905

Session 2013-2014

First Special Report	Football Governance Follow-Up: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2012-13	HC 156
First Report	Scrutiny of the draft Public Bodies (Abolition of the Registrar of Public Lending Right) Order 2013	HC 506
Second Report	Scrutiny of the draft Public Bodies (Merger of the Gambling Commission and National Lottery Commission) Order 2013	HC 256
Second Special Report	Scrutiny of the draft Public Bodies (Merger of the Gambling Commission and National Lottery Commission) Order 2013: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2013-14	HC 646
Third Report	Supporting the creative economy	HC 674
Fourth Report	Nuisance Calls	HC 636
Third Special Report	Supporting the Creative Economy: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report of Session 2013-14	HC 945
Fifth Report	Pre-appointment hearing with the Government's preferred candidate for the Chairman of Ofcom	HC 933
Sixth Report	Online safety	HC 729
Fourth Special Report	Nuisance calls: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2013-14	HC 1211

Session 2014-2015

First Special Report Online safety: Responses to the Committee's Sixth
Report of Session 2013-14

HC 517