
Trophy Women?

Why a balanced board
is good business for sport

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Foreword

Conceived by the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation (WSFF), the Commission on the Future of Women's Sport was launched in 2008 by the then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Andy Burnham MP. Its purpose is to unlock the exceptional potential of women's sport, by addressing the problems of leadership, investment and profile in the sector.



The Commission brings together leading figures from sport, business and the media to raise awareness of the issues, recommend solutions and work directly - in a spirit of positive collaboration - with the people who have the power to effect change.

I'm delighted to be able to introduce *Trophy Women?*, the Commission's first publication. Produced in conjunction with Opportunity Now, the specialists on women in the workplace, the report focuses on the need to increase the numbers of women in leadership positions in sport. We've started at the top because sport must start at the top.

This report draws on lessons from the world's most successful companies to evidence a compelling case for women's place in the boardrooms of British sport. Our aim at the Commission is to work hand-in-hand with leaders in sports bodies, to highlight the problems, provide practical solutions and to increase the number of women in leadership positions. While our role focuses on gender, we also recognise that a balanced board should represent the full diversity of the community, including BME groups and disabled people too.

I would personally like to thank the leaders of the several major national governing bodies (NGBs) to whom we've already spoken, who have pledged their support for the Commission and the important work we're doing. *Trophy Women?* is just the beginning of an ongoing process through which we will seek to help sport to become a modern, world-class sector capable of performing at the highest level.

Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE

Chair, Commission on the Future of Women's Sport

Executive summary

A leadership crisis

Only one in five members of the boards of NGBs for sport is a woman. One quarter of sports have no women in board positions at all. While almost half of all staff in NGBs is female, just 22% of Performance Directors and only 20% of senior management teams are women. This despite women making up half the population. It is no coincidence that less than one in ten women play competitive sport and more than 80% of women do too little sport or exercise to benefit their health.

The issue is not about fairness. Sport is failing in its core business: performance. Underrepresentation of women at a senior level means sport is largely ill-equipped to understand and engage with 51% of the population. More women want to play sport, but the way in which sport is led means it is failing to capitalise on the opportunity to grow grass-roots participation and enjoy greater elite success. As 2012 approaches, reputations are on the line too, as the world will expect to see a modern, progressive and female-friendly sports sector. While there is movement in some sports, these are the exception rather than the rule.

Only one in five members of the boards of NGBs is a woman

One quarter of sports have no women in board positions

Balanced boards are good for business

The way in which organisations are governed and led has a major impact on their performance. Sport has much to learn from other sectors and in particular from the corporate world. Extensive research among leading businesses, notably by McKinsey's, shows that diverse boards make for better decision-making and more effective organisations. Companies where women hold at least 30% of senior management positions are significantly more successful and better able to deal with future challenges.

Organisations seeking to appeal to women employ women leaders in order to provide understanding of the female market at a strategic level. Moreover, for leading companies it is simply good business to fish from the widest available talent pool in recruiting their senior management. These are not just "trophy women".

Barriers to female leadership

However, in order to implement the solutions to effect change, sport needs first to understand the roots of its problem. A survey of Chairs and Chief Executives in leading NGBs revealed some of the reasons that prevent women from taking on the most senior jobs:

Lack of champions: existing leaders are perceived to be reluctant to embrace change and foster female talent in their sport and its governance or management

Institutionalised structures and recruitment processes: boards are too often comprised of volunteers with unlimited tenure, drawn from the ranks of male-dominated participants, with recruitment focused on people already in the sector

Lack of female participation downstream: women remain in the minority in many sports clubs, find it hard to progress into leadership positions and become caught in a vicious circle of underrepresentation

Inhospitable culture: sport's "macho" culture, from the failure of facilities to cater for women, to stereo-typing and discrimination, puts women off participating at a grass-roots level and thus progressing up the leadership ladder

Family-unfriendly career: women remain primary carers in most families, so the nature and timing of sports events imposes significantly on family commitments, in a sector that rarely makes childcare provisions.

Creating the environment for women to succeed

The invaluable lessons from the business world have been reviewed alongside sport's own acknowledged issues to enable the Commission to make a series of recommendations in three key areas. These are intended to act as the basis for further collaboration between the Commission and the sector to help sport create an environment conducive to increasing the number of women in senior roles.

1. Leadership

Existing leaders must become champions for women - employing specialist coaching if necessary - in order to become experts in equality and diversity, high profile role models for change and pro-active mentors of female talent.

2. Governance

Sport must adopt best practice in corporate governance that achieves a fair, open and transparent recruitment process.

Critically, recruitment should encompass not just women already working in and playing sport, but also women from outside sectors. New perspectives, skills and experience from other industries will provide sport with a broader outlook and expertise.

3. Support

Women must be actively supported on the path to leadership: career path development should begin at club level; female talent must be identified, encouraged and pro-actively targeted; role models should be sought-out and promoted and a more female-friendly environment created, with appropriate facilities and family-orientation.

1 State of play

Understanding the Audit

Each year WSFF conducts a Sport Leadership Audit which gives as accurate a picture as possible of the number and proportion of women in senior and other roles in sport. It surveys NGBs who currently receive funding from Sport England, which represent sport from the grass-roots to the elite. The accuracy of the Audit is dependent on the information provided to WSFF by the NGBs and the five Sports Councils. Only three NGBs of the 47 surveyed did not take part in the 2009 Audit.

While size, structures and national remit (i.e. GB v. England) vary across NGBs, the data provided is more than adequate to construct a reliable overview of the sector. Full details of the methodology and the results of the Audit are contained in the Appendices of this report.

Women in leadership

Board positions

The term “board” is used to describe the top tier of governance in an organisation. For the most part, with the exception of the larger NGBs, boards are staffed by volunteers, who are not usually salaried. The representation of women in leadership roles is as follows:

- Women make up 21% of NGB boards – 100 board members out of a total of just under 500, around one in five
- Including positions on sub-committees or broader executive decision-making teams, women still only make up 20% of all leadership roles
- Ten NGBs – a quarter of sports primary administration - do not have a single woman on their board. These are:
 - Angling Development Board
 - British Canoe Union
 - British Cycling
 - British Judo Association
 - British Shooting
 - British Wrestling Association
 - Football Association
 - GB Wheelchair Rugby
 - Modern Pentathlon Association of Great Britain
 - Rugby Football Union

NGBs led by a woman

There are seven NGBs led by a woman.

NGB	Title
Amateur Rowing Association	National Manager
Baseball Softball UK	Head of Operations
British Triathlon Federation	Chief Executive
England Hockey Association	Chief Executive
National Rounders	Director
Rugby Football Union for Women	Chief Executive
Volleyball England	Chief Executive

Sports Councils

Women are much better represented in board roles on Sports Councils than on NGBs. 29% of the five Sports Council boards are women, compared to 21% in NGBs.

Coaching, staff and membership

- Three in ten (30%) of all Performance and Development Directors are female
- 24% of NGB-registered coaches are women, but only 15% of coaches directly employed by NGBs (and therefore working directly with the elite or talented)
- 45% of staff are women
- Of the 3.5m (approx) affiliated members of 29 funded sports, 22% are women.

Analysis

It is no coincidence that the number of women playing sport is critically low. Less than one in ten women plays competitive sport, while 81.5% of women (16.7m) do too little sport or exercise overall to benefit their health. Despite women and girls making up 51% of the population, the number of women at the top level of leadership in sport is just 21%. This underrepresentation at a senior level means that – with some exceptions – sport, as a whole, is ill-equipped to reach out and engage with women and make sport attractive to them.

That 45% of staff in sport are female, but only one in five senior roles is held by a woman, would seem to indicate that sport is not encouraging or developing women to apply for leadership positions. While 80% of sport's leadership is male and its culture and behaviours do not change, the sector is likely to remain caught in a vicious circle of non-progression.

Where there are signs of movement, progress should be highlighted and applauded. Nevertheless, it remains the case that a lack of female leadership in sport continues to compromise its performance and consequently its key opportunity: to unlock the potential of women's sport.

2 Business case for a balanced board

In making the argument for balanced boards, the Commission has used authoritative research from arguably the most competitive sector – the corporate world – to provide a compelling business case for sport.

“ Diversity is at the very core of our ability to serve our clients well and to maximize return for our shareholders. Diversity supports and strengthens the firm’s culture, and it reinforces our reputation as the employer of choice in our industry and beyond.”

The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc.

The role of the board

Boards and senior leadership teams play a vital role in NGB's for sport. That role includes:

- Developing the strategy for sport
- Measuring, communicating and being accountable for performance
- Identifying and exploiting strategic opportunities
- Evaluating and managing risk
- Defining, demonstrating and protecting the values and reputation of the NGB
- Managing the relationships needed to deliver the strategy.

The business case for more women in the senior team is about getting a balance of skills and perspectives to find more creative and innovative ways to do all of these things. It's not just that it is the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do: a diverse board is good for business, whatever the business.

Women contribute to better decision-making and more effective organisations

The benefits of diverse boards have been recognised in the corporate world. One dimensional leadership results in "group think" and stagnation: diverse leadership results in better decision-making and more innovation and creativity. Extensive consultations in 2004¹ with leading businesses on the benefits of more diverse boards reached a series of compelling conclusions:

- Diverse boards consist of fresh minds and the right skills mix to contribute to the growth and development of the organisation
- A diverse board and leadership team will provide the capability to consider a wide range of perspectives
- Diverse boards generate more informed discussions of the issues facing an organisation and are thus more likely to anticipate problems and produce high quality solutions
- Diverse boards bring varied and complimentary perspectives, contributing to the making of strong and dynamic leadership that enables organisations to be effective and competitive.

Women leaders improve competitive performance

Research has shown that those organisations that have a high proportion of women on the board and in senior management positions outperform those who do not. A four-year study of Fortune 500 companies² showed that those with the highest proportion of women on the board showed markedly better financial performance than those with the lowest representation.

Research by McKinsey and Co has uncovered some of the reasons behind this financial performance. This research suggests that the issue of a better gender balance in senior decision-making roles is one that transcends the corporate sector and is pertinent in any sector, including sport, where a senior team is required to make strategic decisions to add value to an organisation.

Companies with women in senior positions lead in organisational excellence

McKinsey's research of 101 corporations across the world found that those with three or more women in senior management positions on committees with an average of ten members scored more highly against their nine criteria of corporate excellence than those without female members. McKinsey's criteria are:

1. Direction
2. Accountability
3. Co-ordination and control
4. External orientation
5. Leadership
6. Innovation
7. Capabilities
8. Motivation
9. Environment and values

The research showed a significant increase in company performance once the critical mass of at least 30% of women on senior management committees was attained. The organisations that scored most highly had operating margins and market capitalisation more than twice as high as those ranked at the bottom.³

A balanced board is best equipped to deal with future challenge

A further survey of 9000 leaders⁴ by McKinsey showed that organisations need both male and female leadership behaviours. It revealed that women showed higher frequencies of behaviour in five of nine key organisational behaviours:

- Male leaders were characterised by individualistic decision making and control and by corrective actions
- Both men and women equally applied intellectual stimulation and efficient communication behaviours
- Women were more likely to show good people management, role modelling, managing expectation and reward, inspiration and participative decision making.

Managing expectation and reward, inspiration and participative decision-making – at which women out-perform men - together with intellectual stimulation, were identified as the four behaviours most effective to addressing the challenges of the future.

In NGBs where leaders often have to rely on influencing the behaviour in affiliated clubs rather than directly controlling it, these attributes are likely to be even more important.

Achieving a more even balance of men and women in leadership positions will better equip NGBs to deal with current and future challenges and opportunities. A failure to do this will risk more than appearing out-moded and out of touch. It will render NGBs fundamentally less effective, compromising sport's ability to address the crisis in women's participation.

“To Shell, having a diverse workforce is the only way we can accomplish our greatest company objectives. Yet, even more importantly, we see it as a matter of global necessity.”

Shell

Best boards fish from the largest possible talent pool

Every successful business will say that they endeavour to seek out the best people to run their organisation. If NGBs want the best talent available then they need women. Women now account for half of the UK's population and labour force; no organisation wanting to attract the best people can afford to cut itself off from half of the talent pool.

Diversity is set to become an issue of increasing significance. By 2011, it is estimated that only 20% of the UK's workforce will be white, male, able bodied and under 45.⁵ Organisations that continue to draw their leaders solely or predominantly from this group of people will be missing out on growing part of the talent pool.

Changes in the workplace mean that women now have skills and experience from other sectors which they can bring into leadership roles in NGBs. Although still disproportionately represented in the lower levels of organisations, women are progressing through the ranks at work and are now 35% of managers and senior officials in the UK.⁶ They are increasingly represented in all sectors and in all types of organisation and bring the skills and expertise that modern organisations need.

Women in senior roles will increase female participation

Women represent the largest space for sport to grow. Sport has to reach out to women and girls, make sport attractive to them and encourage them to participate. This requires action at every level, from NGBs to local clubs.

Boards and senior leadership teams are an important part of the public face of an NGB. To get more women and girls involved in sport, NGBs need to appoint female board members that can relate to their target audience, to develop more relevant role models and to lead by example by having women visibly involved in running sport at the highest levels. Senior leadership teams and boards which do not reflect their sport and the wider community will find it harder to engage with women, to inspire and motivate them and to get the best out of them.

As businesses increase female board membership to help them appeal more successfully to female customers (who make more than 70% of consumer purchasing decisions despite owning only half the national wealth) so sport needs to put women on the board successfully to engage women and attract them to play and succeed at the highest level. However, this means more than just having a "trophy woman". The presence of women at all levels in NGBs, including in senior positions will contribute significantly to providing the insight, experience and presentation needed to increase women's participation.

“Our diversity is our strength, driving business performance and success. It is an integral part of our strategy for competing in the current and future marketplace.”

PriceWaterhouseCoopers

3 Barriers to female leadership

In order to understand why there is such a low number of women in leadership positions, despite a compelling business case to the contrary, Opportunity Now interviewed eight NGB Chief Executives and Chairs who provided an invaluable insight into the sector.

“The problem is historical. Sport has always been run by men who stay in volunteer roles until they die. There is a better mix at the grass roots level but at this rate it will take a long time to come through.”

Female Chief Executive

Lack of champions

Strong and committed leadership is seen as essential to improving women's participation at all levels in sport. Leaders need to be more comfortable with the language and ideas behind equality and diversity and should be more active in encouraging women through the ranks. Currently leaders are perceived as reluctant to embrace change and insufficiently proactive in fostering female talent and challenging local clubs and county organisations to do the same.

“A key barrier across sport is lack of leadership. Getting women into top positions will change things. A female view is, in many respects, different and not always what you want to hear as it may be challenging, but it's very healthy to be challenged.”

Male Chief Executive

Institutionalised structures and recruitment processes

Interviews revealed a broad spectrum of structures and recruitment processes in place in NGBs. Most boards comprise unpaid volunteers. Whilst some posts are skills based and in a few cases, are subject to open competition, many are still discretionary or filled via a system of nominations and elections at county level. In many sports there is a progression in voluntary roles from club through county level and into leadership at a national level.

This means that the 'downstream' problems - low levels of female participation in playing sport and even lower levels of involvement in official roles at club level - results in few women in the pipeline for leadership. All interviewees recognised this as a fundamental issue and many expressed frustration that they have insufficient leverage at local and county level to improve the numbers of women coming through the ranks.

These problems are compounded by the fact that many of these senior voluntary positions can be held for life which means that the makeup of boards and councils is slow to change and will always lag behind the demographics at grass roots level.

Recruitment and promotion into salaried positions in an NGB's executive tend to mirror more closely practices in other sectors, in terms of following formal, open processes. However, the tendency to seek applicants from within sport, advertising in local clubs and via the NGB website, means that, where women are in a minority in a sport, the pool of potential applicants will already be predominantly male.

30 NGBs provided details of their board selection processes. Of these, less than half use an open recruitment process to appoint any board members, preferring instead to use discretionary appointments, nominations and elections. Where open recruitment is used, boards tend to combine it with these other methods.

“Juggling a career with kids is challenging. Coaching and matches are often in the evening which makes it hard if you have young kids as there is a lack of childcare facilities. The higher you go the more time away you are expected to take. International games require ten days away. How many women can manage that?”

Female Chair

“It’s not a very comfortable environment for women. When I go to meetings with my male colleague people will always want to talk to him rather than me.”

Female Chief Executive

Lack of female participation downstream: the vicious circle

With women in the minority in many sports clubs, they find it difficult to progress into leadership positions at a national level. There is a danger of creating a vicious circle: NGBs need women in leadership positions to act as role models and provide the expertise and experience to encourage more women into the sport, but the poor numbers of female participants at club level mean that women are not breaking through into these roles.

Action is needed not only to provide opportunities and facilities for sport which suit women but also a social context for sport which allows them to feel part of their local community and encourages them to make a longer term commitment to sport as part of their lifestyle.

Inhospitable culture

All female interviewees cited a “macho” culture as one of the most significant barriers to women’s participation at club level and to their progression into leadership. Many sports struggle with the legacy of an almost entirely male-dominated culture, which has been slow to change. Issues ranging from the lack of appropriate facilities for women in sports clubs to stereotyping and outright discrimination were cited as evidence of a culture inhospitable to women. This culture acts to dissuade women from taking up voluntary positions on the ladder to the board or applying for jobs in the NGB executive. For women who do get involved, the prevailing culture can mean that their skills are undervalued or overlooked, particularly if their leadership style is different to their male colleagues.

A family unfriendly career

As in many other employment areas, women often have difficulty in juggling sporting commitments with family commitments. This is made more difficult by when and where sport is played. Events are often held in the evenings and at weekends which can present women with children with childcare problems. Although many sports are trying to encourage family participation and many mothers get involved at club level when their children play, there are few clubs that have been able to make childcare provisions to help women take on more formal roles such as coaches and referees.

As women progress, either as players or officials, the problems can become more acute with commitments both nationally and internationally requiring time away from home. This has an impact on the number of women in the pipeline for leadership, particularly for voluntary positions on the board, where board members currently tend to come from players and officials in the sport.

4 Creating the environment for women to succeed

In order to increase the number of women in leadership roles, sport must create an environment that provides the best possible opportunity for female leadership.

In addition to embracing the business case for a balanced board, this requires the sector to focus on three key imperatives:

Leadership: make sport's existing leaders into champions for women

Governance: adopt best practice in corporate governance

Support: pro-actively support women on the path to leadership

Critically, the sector must work to make leadership attractive not only to those women who are already within sport, but to women from other sectors who offer new perspectives, skills and experience.

Leadership: make existing leaders champions for women

The current leadership team play a vital role in setting the culture of the sport. As recognised in the Equality Standard for Sport,⁷ leaders need to understand the reasons for increasing women's participation at all levels in sport and be able to speak with passion and act with credibility in this area.

Coaching for leaders

Leaders may need to be coached and supported in this area as well as learn from other sectors; either within sport or in other public and private sector organisations, valuable lessons can be learnt where top-level commitment has been fostered to encourage change. Establishing cross-sector mentoring and co-coaching has proved an effective mechanism for leaders to share skills and discuss challenges with peers.

Champions

Existing leaders should be acting as role models within their sport. Their values and behaviours have a huge impact not only on their peers and immediate team but on the wider sport. Their commitment needs to be communicated frequently and in different ways. They should be speaking publicly about equality issues and personally endorsing and leading equality work within the sport.

They need to encourage and robustly challenge clubs and counties/regions where women are not thriving.

Mentoring female talent

Leaders also have an important role in seeking out and mentoring female talent within the sport. This will ensure that there is a pipeline of women ready for leadership positions. It also sends a strong signal to others in the sport that women are recognised and valued and that their progression is important. Mentoring should benefit the mentor as much as the mentee. It will bring leaders closer to women at other levels in the sport and allows them to understand better the issues at grass roots level.

“Leadership is the key. Among the chair and the board there is a real consciousness of diversity and gender; it is an important issue when we recruit. We talk a lot about talent internally and keep an eye out for promising women.”

Female Chief Executive

Governance: adopt best practice in corporate governance

A number of high profile corporate failures have prompted careful consideration of the role of boards in the private sector and the development of a Combined Code for Corporate Governance⁸. Although this code sets out standards for the private sector; there is a clear case for sporting bodies - which distribute public money - to conform to, if not to exceed, the best standards of corporate governance in business.

Most of these principles of good governance, which promote more effective and transparent working practices and better informed decision making, provide clear benefits to organisations in all sectors, including sport.

Combined Code for Corporate Governance

The Combined Code for Corporate Governance sets out standards for good practice including:

- The need for a balance between executive and non executive directors (and in particular independent non executive directors) so that no individual or small group can dominate decision taking
- The need for board appointments to be made on merit against objective criteria relating to the specific requirement and circumstances of the organisation
- The need for the Chair to ensure that directors receive accurate, timely and clear information and that they continually update their skills and knowledge
- The importance of objectively evaluating director's performance and where necessary taking action to address a weakness identified.

The Combined Code drew on the Higgs Review into the role and effectiveness of non-executive directors and the Tyson recommendations for improved selection processes for board appointments. Both of these reports emphasised the need for boards to embrace a greater diversity of skills and experience and background and particularly focused on gender as a key issue in the boardroom.

Value of non-executive directors

Higgs also stressed the value of bringing in professionals with specific skills (such as law, accountancy, business consultancy) as non-executive directors to provide additional expertise. In the short term, expanding the role of non-executive directors could allow NGBs to import female talent and expertise. It is important that these posts are filled on the basis of an open and transparent recruitment process. However, with women increasingly occupying senior positions in public and private sector organisations in the UK there is a pool of women who could bring valuable skills to the board. If NGBs are mindful of the need to ensure good practice and a good gender balance during the recruitment process then non-executive posts could provide a way to quickly stimulate change.

Review structure, governance and tenure

For longer-term change, it may be necessary for some NGBs to review their structure and governance and the system of elections and appointments that feed into the senior management team. In particular, where elected posts can be held for long periods or indefinitely, NGBs should consider changing these posts to fixed-term appointments with regular review and re-election to allow a new generation of leaders through.

Establish a skills-based, open and transparent recruitment processes

The Combined Code for Corporate Governance places particular emphasis on establishing proper processes for the appointment of board members. Our research reveals that some NGBs still appoint board members at the Chair's discretion with no open recruitment process or proper assessment and communication of competencies and skills required. In many others the recruitment process is ad hoc at best with boards and leadership teams often reliant on a limited pool of candidates, supplied by clubs or county/regional sports organisations or using their own personal networks to identify candidates.

Establishing a formal process for recruitment to the board and senior leadership is essential. Without this, women who are not well represented in the traditional recruitment networks will not break through into leadership; trapping sport in a vicious circle where, with so few women leaders in place to role model and change the culture, few women will be able to make it through the ranks. A model for recruitment processes is provided overleaf. Further resources are available from the Equality Standard for Sport.⁹

“ We found the right candidates because we looked in the right places. It was hard work but we expanded where we advertised and used non-traditional media and also used female contacts in the sport to flag up the vacancy in the right places.”

Female Chief Executive

“ Decision-making needs to be shared by people of high competence, with different skill sets and different world views.”

Female Chair

A best practice recruitment process¹⁰

i. The leadership brief

Research indicates that the more senior the appointment, the less time is spent defining the brief.¹¹ The rigour and openness that is common in lower managerial positions is not evident when it comes to board positions. Candidates are often selected from a small network of trusted peers, thus missing an opportunity to bring new skills and experiences and perspectives into the senior team.

The first step in the recruitment process is to consider what is required from the leadership team and the team's individual members, both now and in the future, in order to face the issues and challenges likely to arise in a sport. The next is to analyse the extent to which the current team have the relevant skills, knowledge and competencies to meet these challenges and identify what new skills and knowledge are needed in the senior team.

This analysis will allow a clear, bias-free leadership framework to be drawn up, defining the competencies and attributes needed from all leaders and a person specification for every job. Establishing this clear leadership framework and person specification will help maintain a focus on looking for ability and potential in leadership candidates, rather than "fit" and past experience. Someone who is well known to the board and has done a similar job before may not always be the best candidate.

The brief for the job in hand should focus on the essentials; the skills, competencies and attributes needed rather than secondary issues such as mobility, job location or working pattern. Highlighting these can have an impact on women's willingness to apply for a job. If there are constraints and requirements for the job they should be robustly questioned to ensure that they are essential.

ii. Headhunters and search firms

If headhunters and search companies are used they should be asked to draw up a diverse list of candidates, including women. It is inevitably quicker and easier for headhunters to fall back on obvious tried and tested candidates for senior positions and research indicates that, unless briefed otherwise, they provide mirror images of the existing board. In addition to providing a diverse list, headhunters should be given the time and resources to be creative and to seek out candidates from a broader talent pool.

Headhunters are more likely to be able to do this if they take equality and diversity seriously in their own organisation and can demonstrate that they have had previous success in appointing senior women elsewhere. It is important to meet the team that will be managing the search and ensure that they understand issues of bias and stereotyping and will be able to represent the recruiting organisation to candidates in a positive light. Headhunters should be briefed to keep a constant eye out for promising female candidates on an ongoing basis.

iii. Recruitment literature and channels of communication

Recruitment literature should be scrutinised to ensure that it does not alienate female candidates in its use of language or images. Positive images of women in recruitment literature have been used very effectively to encourage women to apply for jobs.

The media used to recruit also need to be scrutinised. If newspapers, magazines and internet sites are to be used for advertising, ensure that those chosen are read and used equally, if not more frequently, by women. Consider other channels of communication to reach out to potential female applicants, such as women's business networks.

iv. Positive communication

Recruitment should be part of an overarching communications strategy. Organisations need to communicate their commitment to gender equality at all levels through many channels. Work to widen women's participation in sport will have positive spill-over effects into increasing the pool of potential candidates for jobs. Likewise, negative publicity about an organisation's lack of commitment to women will damage its reputation and put off potential candidates. Success and role models should be celebrated, as they will reinforce perceptions that "this is a good place for women to work."

v. Robust assessment process

Diversity needs to go beyond the shortlist. It needs to extend to the way in which candidates are reviewed and assessed. It is important that the assessment panel is as diverse as possible and has clear guidance on best recruitment practice. There should be a structured approach to interviewing and decision-making, assessing against the brief rather than on instinct. It is important to consider how the final decision on appointment is made. If the Chair or Chief Executive makes the final decision then this should be made in line with the criteria used by the assessment panel and not on the basis of "chemistry" or comfort.

vi. Induction and support

Induction into any new role is important, particularly so when the newcomer may feel in a minority. Once the candidate has been selected it is important to have a planned process of induction, introducing them to key stakeholders and familiarising them with the role of the board and the formal and informal channels of communication and influence throughout the organisation. Appointing a candidate who's not from the traditional mould can initially lead to tensions in the leadership team. Recognising and preparing the leadership team for this is important. Developing an atmosphere where constructive challenges to the status quo are viewed positively will ultimately create a more dynamic and innovative leadership team.

Support: pro-actively support women on the path to leadership

Career development from club level

The career path from local clubs to county or regional level and then onto the board or council of an NGB is often dominated by men, reflecting the higher male participation rates in many sports. Without active intervention this is unlikely to change for some time. NGBs need to challenge clubs at a local and county level to get more women involved in the management of sport and coming through to national level. NGBs need to review what levers are available to them to encourage this to happen. These range from the personal influence of senior leaders to funding and resources.

Identify and encourage female talent

Within the NGB executive and in the pipeline to board positions, promotions and job appointments should always be made on merit; however, women, who are often in the minority in many sports, may need support and encouragement to push themselves forward. A formal or informal process of talent spotting and succession planning would allow talented women to be identified early in their career and provided with support and development opportunities.

Development opportunities such as mentoring, coaching, job-shadowing and leadership training can all been used effectively to support women at the threshold of moving into leadership. The Women in Leadership Programme (hosted by UK Sport) has demonstrated the value of such opportunities, but its learnings must be implemented across the sector.

Recognising talented women and ensuring that they are supported and given the right job experiences and platforms from which to show their talents will ensure that NGBs have a pipeline of potential female leaders to consider when making a senior appointment. NGBs can then select the best candidate from a shortlist that reflects all the best available talent.

Pro-active targeting

Women may also need specific extra encouragement to put themselves forward for senior positions. Research by Hewlett Packard shows that women apply for jobs only if they feel that they meet 100% of the stated criteria, whereas men will put themselves forward if they feel that they meet just 60%.¹² Recognising this, NGBs should proactively target potential female candidates when an opening arises.

If the 2008/2009 Equality Bill, introduced into the House of Commons on 24 April 2009, passes into law in its current form, it will allow organisations to pick someone for a job from an underrepresented group when they have a choice between two or more candidates who are equally suitable, provided they do not have a general policy of doing so in every case.

“ We need to be prepared to have more family friendly volunteering options for women at local clubs... break volunteer roles down into more manageable chunks... you would also get people volunteering for longer because they won't get consumed by it. ”

Female Chief Executive

Seek out and promote female role models

Where women are breaking through into areas of sport in which they have been traditionally underrepresented it is important to promote them as female role models. Whether it is a woman becoming Chief Executive or a woman making it as a club coach, they will inspire and motivate other women. Women at all levels need to be encouraged to speak about their experiences, make constructive suggestions for change and assume the responsibility of acting as a role model for others.

Women in a male dominated environment can often be reluctant to speak out and “stick their head above the parapet” but unless women are prepared to play their part by taking responsibility for change then it will be slow to happen.

Create a more female-friendly environment: facilities and flexibility

Commitment and investment is needed to create a more female-friendly environment in sport at all levels in order to increase women's involvement. This will have a positive impact on the number of women progressing through the pipeline from player or official onto the board and will also contribute to creating a conducive environment within an NGB, which in turn should help to attract and retain women in top jobs. At a basic level, activities and facilities should be designed to encourage women to play sport not only for fitness, but also as a social and community activity.

In addition, clubs need to provide more support and flexibility to women who want to participate. There is no doubt that sport will always be played in the evening and at weekends and any involvement either as a player or as a volunteer will require being present at these times.

However, sport needs to rethink its expectations of volunteers. Reviewing these roles and finding ways in which they could be reorganised to reduce the evening and weekend commitments would open up new volunteering possibilities for women struggling to balance a wish to get more involved with other domestic responsibilities. Introducing “job sharing”, or breaking a volunteer job into a series of tasks that could be shared, would allow women to juggle volunteering with domestic responsibilities. This would promote a longer volunteer relationship by preventing burn out and allowing women's commitment to evolve as their domestic circumstances change.

“ I am not a fan of quotas... But the International Federation insists that delegations be 50/50 male and female which is great as it forces interesting discussions and provides an opportunity for up and coming women to be put forward into this environment. ”

Female Chief Executive

5 The way forward

Team work

This report is a first step in demonstrating why a balanced board is good business for sport. The ambition is that NGBs - individually and collectively – utilise its findings to build a compelling business case for having more women in senior positions. It is in the interests of individual sports and the sector as a whole to prioritise and accelerate the appointment of women to their boards, for which informed planning will be required.

Collaborative working doesn't end with this report however. The Commission would like to continue working with NGBs and other stakeholders to further develop its understanding of the governance of individual organisations, attitudes towards female leadership in the sector and the challenges faced in implementing the recommendations in this report. This insight will be applied to the on-going work between the Commission and sport to drive positive change.

Sharing and celebrating best practice

Feedback from initial consultation with leaders in some NGBs has shown an appetite for understanding how the most progressive governing bodies, with higher numbers of female leaders, are achieving success and enjoying the benefits that more diverse leadership brings. The Commission will encourage NGBs to collaborate across sports and create forums and resources through which to share best practice.

As female leadership in the sector develops and sports begin to reap the benefits of balanced boards, the Commission would like to work with NGBs to endorse and promote their successes. Just as individual women in senior positions should be held up as role models, so progressive, individual NGBs should inspire others. Over time, the sector in the UK should be in a position to celebrate its success and be recognised as a role model internationally inside and outside the sector.

Hitting the target

The Commission will actively encourage individual NGBs and the sector as a whole to commit to targets for balanced boards. Public funding for sports should oblige NGBs to meet – not just commit to - minimum requirements for female leadership.

The Commission, through WSFF's Leadership Audit, will continue to monitor and report annually on the number of women in senior roles. Those NGBs that are presently unable to respond fully to the Audit are encouraged to implement the necessary systems and policies to allow them to do so. Moreover, NGBs should monitor their own performance and be prepared to take constructive action to meet targets.

“It’s about giving competent women a platform to demonstrate their skills so they can get onto the voluntary sports administration ladder. Plus, we need a framework that makes it clear that women have to be included in the leadership of sport and that NGBs will not get funded unless there is a properly inclusive corporate governance model.”

Female chair

“There is a lack of role models: there are very few visible women. Those who have made it to the top and have a high profile are often top talented female athletes, which is great, but we also need a few more ordinary women at the top that other women can relate to.”

Female Chief Executive

Appendices

Report methodology

46 national governing bodies (NGBs) receive funding from Sport England. Each funded NGB was emailed a spreadsheet survey focusing on the demographic profile of their staff and board. The questionnaire requested data on staff members, board members, non-board decision makers (e.g. heads of committees and executive decision making team), coaches (both affiliated and employed) and affiliated members (including youth profile). The gender of Development and Performance Directors were also included (if applicable).

Opportunity Now conducted eight telephone interviews with Chief Executives and Chairs of NGBs. The interviewees volunteered for the process following an introductory letter.

NGB	Female Chief Executive	% Women board members ¹	% Women in executive leadership positions ²	% Women in ALL leadership positions	Female Performance Director	Female Development Director	% Employed coaches who are women	% Affiliated coaches who are women	% Female staff
England Hockey	YES	33	50	38	NO	YES	29	27	67
England Netball		73	0	62	YES	YES	100	96	90
England Squash		14	38	29	NO	NO	27	19	32
English Boccia Association		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
English Lacrosse Association		38	36	36	YES	NO	70	44	36
English Table Tennis Association		10	16	15	NO	NO	42	14	44
Exercise Movement and Dance Partnership		75	-	-	N/A	YES	-	99	90
GB Wheelchair Rugby		0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-
Goalball UK		33	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Great Britain Wheelchair Basketball Association		30	0	30	NO	N/A	0	25	42
Lawn Tennis Association		27	25	29	NO	YES	10	25	51
Modern Pentathlon Association of Great Britain		0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
National Rounders Association	YES	29	63	43	NO	NO	-	-	90
Royal Yachting Association		11	0	8	NO	NO	0	19	64
Rugby Football League		20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rugby Football Union		0	8	7	NO	NO	1	8	22
Rugby Football Union for Women ⁵	YES	50	71	59	YES	NO	20	0	57
Snowsport England		25	17	21	NO	NO	23	33	67
The FA		0	3	2	NO	YES	14	11	-
UK Athletics		13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Volleyball England	YES	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	29
AVERAGE (%)		21	21	20			24	15	45

¹ All who sit on top tier of governance, including executive positions and non-executive (trustee positions). Voting rights vary by NGB.

² All executive leadership positions including Heads of Committees and executives in decision making positions.

³ English Gymnastics are the funded NGB. However, at time of going to print, English Gymnastics does not have a management infrastructure so British Gymnastics is included.

⁴ As we went to press the ECB recruited 2 women as special advisors to their board.

⁵ The Rugby Football Union for Women (RFUW) is a separate entity to the Rugby Football Union (RFU), however Sport England fund them as one organisation. The RFUW responded separately to this survey.

The Commission on the Future of Women's Sport

The Commission on the Future of Women's Sport brings together leading figures from sport, business and the media to address the critical issues of leadership, investment and profile for women's sport in the UK. It is backed by the Government and managed by the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation.

Today, women hold just one in five of the top jobs in sport, investment in women's sport lags far behind men's and only two per cent of sports coverage in the media is devoted to female competitors and teams.

These statistics reveal a bias that is preventing women's sport from reaching its potential – from elite sport to the grassroots. Progress would bring far-reaching benefits, for Britain's sporting reputation and success, for young girls who find role models who can inspire them to get involved, and for a commercial women's sport market that holds real potential for growth.

Over the next three years, Commission members, chaired by Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE, will seek to raise awareness of the issues, recommend solutions and work directly with those with the power to effect change.

To find out more and to get in touch, visit www.wsff.org.uk/commission/ or email commission@wsff.org.uk.

Opportunity Now

Opportunity Now empowers employers to accelerate change for women in the workplace because it makes good business sense. It works with its membership of 350 employers, from the UK's largest to some of the smallest in the private, public and education sectors to offer tailored, practical and pragmatic advice on workplace issues.

Opportunity Now is part of Business in the Community, a registered charity. Business in the Community (BITC) works to inspire, engage, support and challenge companies on responsible business to continually improve their positive impact on society.

www.opportunitynow.org.uk

The Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation

The Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation (WSFF) is the charity that campaigns to create a nation of active women, increasing the fitness, health and well-being of women and girls by making physical activity an integral part of their lives.

In 2007, WSFF published the ground-breaking report, It's time, which brought the crisis in women's sport and fitness to the nation's attention. In 2008, following an industry-wide consultation, WSFF launched Creating a Nation of Active Women, the first national strategy to increase women's physical activity. As part of its recommendations and with government backing, WSFF set up the Commission on the Future of Women's Sport.

WSFF works with government, sport, business, media and academia to:

- Ensure sport and fitness deliverers give the customer what she wants, creating supply in the market through an experience that is tailored to women's needs
- Foster a culture in which active is attractive, creating demand from women to play sport and exercise in a society that encourages them to participate
- Persuade policy makers to use their influence and resources to achieve the vision of a nation of active women, creating a policy environment that enables women to be active

WSFF is funded by government, through Sport England and by sponsorship and donations.

www.wsff.org.uk

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