

Raising the importance of physical literacy



Background

On the 10th of March 2021 [Dr Liz Durden-Myers](#) alongside [Ali Oliver MBE](#) and [Sue Wilkinson MBE](#) presented evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee for Sport and Recreation.



The House of Lords Committee aim to consult a range of experts to help guide a National Plan for Sport and Recreation as well as inviting the public to provide their views on how we can remove barriers to participation in sport and recreation and facilitate more active lifestyles.

The Committee will look at a wide range of issues including:

- How we can increase physical activity, including among young people.
- How we can increase participation in sport among underrepresented groups including women and girls, disabled people, people from ethnic minority communities and low income groups.
- Whether current funding structures are effective in getting money to where it has most impact.

About the Committee



The project

Specifically, Liz, Ali and Sue tackled the issues and opportunities surrounding Physical Education, School Sport and Community Club Links.

The discussion topics centred around the following themes:

- The effectiveness of the PE and Sport Premium on the quality of PE and sport in schools.
- Whether local sports clubs should be involved in delivering sports in school for younger children.
- Whether Ofsted should have a bigger role in assessing PE in schools.
- How sport and activity can be made more fun for young people.
- Whether more should be done to make school sports facilities available to children outside of school hours.





Liz highlighted a few areas of challenge across the education section including:

"In higher education, physical education undergraduate programmes are becoming increasingly academic, which means that our graduates are really proficient in sport sciences but we are losing practical application and pedagogic practice. We need to ensure that within higher education we embed practice and theory so that we can take the theory and enhance practice. In the initial teacher training landscape, it is welcome that we have new routes into teaching through School Direct, PGCE and assessment only. However, all those routes into teaching need to be followed up with career-long professional learning that is rich and enables our new teachers and established teachers to respond to the changing challenges they face in education.

In the primary sector and in higher education, we still face challenges related to the limited provision of training. We are sending primary generalists into the teaching profession with as little as six hours' training in physical education. It is not surprising that they come back saying they do not feel confident or competent to deliver physical education.

In the secondary space, PE is disappearing from the curriculum and being redirected to other academic subjects. That is really worrying, especially at key stage 4 level. There is a growing focus on examination PE and we are losing our core physical education identity.

In the primary space, there is a lot of outsourcing of physical education curriculum time to coaching companies and a narrowing of the curriculum. We are losing a diverse range of opportunities for all children to experience a range of activities rooted primarily in enjoying being active."

Physical literacy as the focus of Physical Education:

"We would like physical literacy to be at the centre of physical education, with the provision of clearer guidance and local networks to support senior leaders, generalist teachers and PE specialists to deliver a high-quality physical education offer."

[Watch full evidence session](#)



[Read transcript](#)



Impact

Liz also featured in the following TV interview and media articles advocating the importance of physical literacy, physical education and school sport as a result of the engagement with the House of Lords:

[BBC Points West interview](#)



[University of Gloucestershire](#)



[Punchline Magazine](#)



[Somerset Live](#)



Liz championed the role of Physical Literacy in uniting the movement and allowing multi-agencies to share a common language, goal and approach to promoting lifelong engagement in physical activity.

Since then physical literacy has been an increasing focus for policy makers and is now informing a range of new policies across sport, education and health.

The IPLA were delighted to see physical literacy being discussed at Government level which is sure to inform the policy landscape in the future.