

MAKING CRICKET A MORE INCLUSIVE SPORT

The ECB's response to the Independent
Commission for Equity in Cricket

RAISING
THE GAME



We all have a part to play in making cricket the most inclusive sport



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FOREWORD - BY RICHARD THOMPSON, ECB CHAIR

THIS DOCUMENT SETS OUT THE NEXT STEPS IN THE GAME-WIDE EFFORTS TO MAKE CRICKET A MORE INCLUSIVE, DIVERSE AND EQUITABLE SPORT. THE COMMITMENTS THAT ARE SET OUT IN THESE PAGES ARE OUR RESPONSE TO THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE REPORT BY THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION FOR EQUITY IN CRICKET (ICEC), HOLDING UP A MIRROR TO CRICKET, WHICH WAS PUBLISHED IN JUNE THIS YEAR. THE ICEC WAS ESTABLISHED BY THE ECB IN 2021 TO EXAMINE ISSUES AROUND RACISM, SEXISM AND CLASS-BASED DISCRIMINATION AND TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO HELP THE SPORT ACHIEVE LASTING CHANGE.

We recognise that there is much for us to do to ensure cricket is a sport that is open to all and where everyone feels welcome and valued. As the ICEC demonstrated, many people have felt excluded from cricket or have faced discrimination.

On the day the ICEC published its report, I apologised without reservation on behalf of cricket's wider leadership to anyone who has suffered because of these failings. As well as reiterating that apology here, I reaffirm our absolute commitment that cricket will strive to become the most inclusive sport in England and Wales.

There is no doubt that the ICEC highlighted to great effect the impact of discrimination on individuals and the extent of the systemic challenges to be addressed. Its in-depth analysis also presented an opportunity to put in place a comprehensive plan of action that will deliver meaningful change and rebuild trust among the communities we serve.

To develop this response, we have worked with our stakeholders across professional and recreational cricket: including the First Class Counties, Women's Regional Teams, County Cricket Boards and the MCC. We have consulted representative groups from diverse communities, as well as our charity partners and organisations who have expertise in key areas. This process of reflection and engagement has been immensely valuable. It is only through cricket coming together and listening to the views of all voices that we can deliver the scale of change that is required.

The commitments in this document are as broad in scope as the issues covered in the ICEC report itself. Collectively, they represent a set of actions that will accelerate and intensify our work to make cricket a game for everyone, actions that cricket can deliver and fund within an achievable timeframe.

Some actions can be implemented relatively swiftly or even immediately, such as the equalisation of England Women's match fees with England Men. Through new or extended partnerships with ACE, Chance to Shine, Lord's Taverners, MCC Foundation and the South Asian Cricket Academy (SACA) we can also make a swift difference in breaking down barriers to our game.

Beyond these near-term actions, there are changes that will take time and investment to develop and implement over a longer period. In some areas, such as engaging Black communities and increasing access to cricket for state school students, the ICEC has asked us to draw up dedicated, long-term action plans over the next 12 months and we are committed to doing so, along with significantly increasing our investment in these areas and other efforts to improve EDI. Removing barriers to the Talent Pathway will also take time. We are committed to tackling these challenges and recognise that this will involve long-term, sustained effort.

Once the focus shifts towards implementation, we will continue to evolve our approach as we learn more about what is working and hear further feedback from diverse communities. There may be some areas where we discover that we can move faster than originally hoped; in others we may find that it will take longer to deliver, or that over time we need to change our approach. In all cases, we will continue to provide regular, transparent updates on our progress and timelines. This work will be led by Clare Connor, ECB Deputy Chief Executive Officer, and overseen by a sub-group of the ECB Board including myself, Baroness Zahida Manzoor, Pete Ackerley, Ebony Rainford-Brent, Sir Ron Kalifa and Richard Gould.

Across the sport, from the ECB, our Counties and partners, we are united in our belief that cricket should be a game for everyone and our commitment to keep working until this becomes a reality.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WE ASKED THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION FOR EQUITY IN CRICKET TO REPORT ON THE STATE OF EQUITY AROUND GENDER, RACE AND CLASS WITHIN CRICKET TO HELP US MAKE OUR SPORT A MORE INCLUSIVE, MORE WELCOMING ONE. HOWEVER UNCOMFORTABLE ITS FINDINGS HAVE BEEN, IT HAS GIVEN US AN OPPORTUNITY TO LISTEN, TO LEARN AND TO ACT SO THAT WE CAN REALISE OUR AMBITION OF BECOMING THE UK'S MOST INCLUSIVE TEAM SPORT.

The Commission acknowledged that for all the challenges it identified, it had seen what it called “green shoots”, and examples of good work happening across the game to break down barriers and make our sport more inclusive. There has been significant progress through our Transforming Women’s and Girls’ Cricket and South Asian Action Plans, while The Hundred has inclusivity at its heart and is helping engage new and diverse audiences to both play and watch cricket. The ICEC recognised that while the challenges it identified were significant, we were not starting from a blank sheet of paper.

We are very grateful to the ICEC for the thorough and detailed recommendations it has given us. We committed to responding in an open and transparent manner to the report. We have undertaken more than 50 consultation meetings over the three months since the report was published, to help us identify how best to implement the findings. We are taking forward most of the recommendations. Many we will be implementing by the letter – or, indeed, have already implemented. Others we will implement in slightly different ways or to a different timescale, and there are only a small number we will not take forward which we explain in the report.

We are mindful that to address the challenges identified by the ICEC, we need to make long-term, systemic change, and this does not happen overnight. We understand that there is an impatience for change, and we share that. But in some areas the results of changes we make now may not be seen for some time. We see a determination and commitment from people right across our sport to make this a game for everyone. If we work together, recognise the progress that is being made and unite behind our efforts to go further, we can make cricket the most inclusive sport in England and Wales.

The plan we set out in this document is not the totality of work happening across cricket - each County will have its own story of what it is doing at a local level to break down barriers. Nor will it be the end of our work. The next phase of our journey towards becoming the most inclusive team sport will include a broader development of an EDI Action Plan that fully incorporates other protected characteristics, such as disability and the LGBTQ+ community. Our commitment to constantly learn and improve will continue.

OUR RESPONSE

To create a game-wide transformation in **culture**, we will establish and embed new organisational values and behaviours for the ECB, to allow us to lead a more inclusive game. We will use this as a framework to provide direction and support for each organisation within cricket to create their own organisational values and inclusive behaviours. We will invest in enhanced game-wide EDI **education**, and adopt a **more robust, transparent and accountable approach to EDI**. This has included the creation of an EDI Board sub-group who will support, challenge, and hold the executive accountable for our ongoing EDI progress. We will also improve **processes**, by introducing Equality Impact Assessments into decision-making.

Recreational cricket is only able to happen thanks to the contribution of tens of thousands of **volunteers** every week, and they have a vital role to play if we are to realise the ambition of becoming a more inclusive sport. We will therefore **develop a game-wide Volunteering Strategy** and integrate key EDI principles into training.

To achieve **equity for women's and girls' cricket** we will invest ahead of revenues to continue to accelerate growth across the women's cricket landscape. We are immediately increasing the match fees for England Women to equalise them with England Men. We are developing a Women's Professional Game Strategy for 2025-2029 to plot our path to sustainable domestic player pay parity in the future, and will work with Metro Bank, our Women's and Girls' Cricket Champion partner, to triple the number of girls' club teams by 2026.

We will work with partners in the wider game to design an enhanced and expanded **Talent Pathway** that aims to remove barriers and increase opportunity. Our aim is that by 2025 finance will not be a barrier for Talent Pathway participants.

To tackle barriers for **state school pupils**, we will develop an action plan designed to increase the number of state primary and secondary school students playing cricket. As immediate steps, we are increasing investment with Chance to Shine and Lord's Taverners to provide cricket in more schools with large numbers of pupils receiving free school meals, and in schools for students with special educational needs. We are also partnering with MCC Foundation to broaden access to the Talent Pathway for state school children.

A **Diverse Communities Action Plan** will set out how we will work to engage **Black communities** as well as building on work we have already carried out with South Asian communities. Building trust with these communities is a key part of this. We will invest in the African Caribbean Engagement (ACE) Programme to enable its expansion, as well as expanding our Core Cities programme to focus on Black communities as well as South Asian communities. We will also partner with the South Asian Cricket Academy (SACA) to support more young British South Asian cricketers to make a professional breakthrough.

As well as making our game more inclusive, discrimination has to be dealt with where it exists. Through our recently established **Anti-Discrimination Unit**, we will provide support and training across the cricket network to enhance understanding of discrimination and the management of complaints across the cricket network. We will launch a customer charter setting out clear expectations of both complainants and the investigating body to ensure a fair and transparent outcome for all involved; and enhance our data collection and understanding of the game-wide prevalence of discrimination through a new case management system. We will explicitly include victimisation as an offence in the **Anti-Discrimination Code**.

We will also **introduce further independence in our regulatory processes** to give greater assurance around the separation between this area and the remainder of the ECB. We will establish a new Cricket Regulator, overseen by an independent Cricket Regulatory Board - and ring-fenced from the rest of the ECB - which will be responsible for enforcement of regulations and carrying out investigations.

If we are to succeed in ingraining inclusivity and making our game representative of the communities we serve, this needs to be reflected in **governance** - pulling on a diverse range of skills and experiences to make our game stronger and break down barriers. County Boards have made considerable progress in becoming more representative since 2019, and we will include more ambitious Board targets for gender diversity and ethnic diversity based on local demographics within the County Partnership Agreement (CPA), subject to consultation with the game. We will include enhanced EDI standards in the next CPA from 2025, while venues which host major matches will be assessed on their performance against EDI minimum standards.

In delivering the actions we are committing to, and in making our game more inclusive, we will seek to be open and transparent about our progress. This includes publishing annual progress updates on our EDI Action Plan and a full **State of Equity** report every three years. To provide further independent perspectives and expertise to help us become the most inclusive sport, we will establish an **EDI Advisory Panel** with a range of expertise. This will help us to ensure that our investments and initiatives are having the intended impact.

CULTURE AND TRAINING

The ICEC concluded that a game-wide transformation in culture, supported by investment in training and people, would support the tackling of discrimination and delivery of equity, diversity and inclusion across cricket

The Commission provided a number of recommendations that included: work on shifting cultures across the sport, new approaches to continuous training and development across key influencers and senior leaders, and dedicated resource to handle people matters.

In addition, the ICEC recommended that the ECB develops a game-wide Volunteering Strategy in collaboration with the County cricket organisations, including the provision of training and support to develop EDI awareness and skills.

OUR RESPONSE

Culture

Working with an external provider, the ECB will update its own values, including a strong emphasis on EDI principles, and will embed these new values within its recruitment, induction, performance management, and promotion processes. We will also provide a framework and guidance for the wider game to do the same, working with County organisations to ensure that their values are aligned with the ambition of becoming the most inclusive sport in England and Wales.

To help bring these values to life, we will also articulate a series of behaviours that demonstrate what living these values really means. Counties and clubs across the game may have different examples of what these values mean to them and how they can embody them, and we will develop supporting tools to assist them in undertaking this exercise.

Cultural health checks will be undertaken to help build more inclusive cultures within County organisations and the ECB. We are currently discussing this with UK Sport and Women in Sport to better understand their approach, and how we might learn from it. The checks will draw upon a range of quantitative and qualitative data sources from across the game to identify where further support is required within the network. In order to help nurture a culture of learning and continuous improvement, templates and guidance will be created for organisations to undertake their own in-house reviews.

Key actions:

- Commission external provider to lead and deliver consultation to create game-wide values and supporting set of behaviours. We will run a tender process later this year and the project will be delivered across 2024.

Training

In 2023, the ECB, with support from Sport England, launched Inclusive Leadership education for all leaders across cricket, delivered by external specialists, Inclusive Employers.

The programme will be completed by May 2024. Once completed, each leader in cricket organisations across the game will have been educated to:

- Understand discrimination and how to actively tackle it
- Navigate topical EDI issues with relevant and actionable resources and insights
- Engage employees to drive sustainable cultural change that supports EDI
- Share experiences and best practices with peers across the game

The course focuses on several key EDI topics including EDI fundamentals, inclusive culture, and discrimination and harassment. To supplement this further, each organisation has access to further one-on-one support from Inclusive Employers to work together on challenges specific to their organisation.

The programme content will be expanded to place greater emphasis on building EDI competency and improving racial literacy in the game’s leadership. And we will continue our work to build an ongoing education and training curriculum for four different areas of the game (Leadership - including both Board and Executive, professional and Pathway players, the ECB and County Organisation staff, and the recreational game).

This will be led by a new EDI Education Manager who will start during September 2023, supported by subject experts in each area.

Key actions:

- Develop EDI education curriculum for the game across four key cohorts (Leadership, Professional Players, the ECB and Network Staff, and Recreational Game). This will be created in partnership with key stakeholders and external providers in the coming months through to February 2024.
- Ensure game’s leadership complete the Inclusive Leadership programme by May 2024.
- Scope and commission provider within next six months to deliver racial literacy programme for leaders in the game. Programme delivery will commence following the completion of Inclusive Leadership programme.

In partnership with external experts, we will develop bespoke EDI training for coaches within cricket. This will include improving the knowledge and understanding of our coaches on how to recognise and manage biases to enable coaches to take a more holistic view of player assessment. We will integrate EDI training as a core element of all coach courses and a bespoke training module will be developed for existing coaches as part of their continuous professional development. Subject to consultation, within the next CPA we propose that it will be a requirement for all County coaches to have undertaken training on recognising and managing bias.

Key actions:

- Create module on identifying and managing biases for existing coaches to undertake as part of their Continuous Professional Development. Embed EDI training within all coaching courses. To be in place ahead of 2024 season.

Volunteering

Volunteers play a vital role in cricket across England and Wales, indeed recreational cricket wouldn’t exist without the team of volunteers who make the game happen every week.

In its report, the ICEC recommended that the ECB develops a game-wide Volunteering Strategy in collaboration with the County cricket organisations.

The Commission specified that the strategy should include how volunteers would be encouraged to contribute to cricket's aim of becoming a more equitable, diverse and inclusive sport, and added that volunteers should be trained and supported to develop their EDI knowledge and skills, including specific training on discrimination and sexual harassment.

The ECB will produce a game-wide Volunteering Strategy. Consultations that took place in recent years across the cricket network provided valuable insight on attitudes, habits and commitments of volunteers and this will help inform the strategy.

As the ICEC recommends, this research will be further strengthened by learnings from across the charitable sector, both within and beyond the sports sector.

The strategy will reflect the wide variety of volunteer roles within the game and include clear direction for volunteers on how they can contribute to creating and sustaining inclusive and welcoming cricket environments. This will include the development of new resources and integrating key EDI principles into existing training.

In addition, this strategy will address barriers that may prevent a wider diversity of people from becoming volunteers.

This work will build on the launch, in 2023, of The Cricket Collective, a unifying volunteer identity. Through The Cricket Collective we aim to celebrate diversity, demonstrate that there is more than one way to volunteer in cricket, and inspire more people than ever to get involved.

The aim of The Cricket Collective is to help unite people across the game, creating a collaborative and cohesive community of people who feel able to impact the future development of the game.

Volunteers are often the first person that new people to the sport meet. It is our responsibility as the national governing body to make sure each volunteer feels confident in knowing how they can create an inclusive and welcoming environment, and where they can turn to for support when needed.

Key actions:

- We will build on existing work in this space and conduct additional consultations to produce a game-wide Volunteering Strategy over the next 12 months.

EDI POLICY, PROCESS AND LEADERSHIP

The ICEC recommended that greater emphasis and expertise be placed within the policies, processes and people that are leading cultural transformation, and that EDI must be a critical priority in decision-making, alongside or ahead of commercial or reputational considerations.

The Commission noted that the language around cricket must change, specifically, that we should be swifter in labelling discrimination and decisive in the way we name racism, sexism and other forms of prejudice.

OUR RESPONSE

Policy and Process

We are working with external experts to assess what best practice in this space looks like in terms of gender-based budgeting, complying with public sector equality duty and what it means to become an anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-classist organisation, and understand what this would mean for the ECB and cricket in order to develop options for how we can best deliver these areas.

We agree with the ICEC that this is an important shift in the language the ECB and the game uses around EDI and tackling discrimination. We will define what the commitment to be anti-racist, anti-sexist or anti-classist means to us, share this with the Counties, and incorporate it in our decision-making processes (see other recommendations). But we also believe it should go broader than these three identities, and we will explore how to incorporate, for example, anti-ableist or anti-homophobic commitments too. These commitments will include unambiguously naming discrimination where it occurs, and not relying on identity holders to highlight these failures.

Further and in-depth work is required to understand how we might implement the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). We are in conversations with the Equality and Human Rights Commission to better understand the practicalities behind voluntarily complying with the Duty, as well as the potential benefits and impact of this on cricket.

A two-stage Equalities Impact Assessment process will be embedded within the ECB's Business Planning Process and incorporated into the ECB's project management framework to ensure there is a clear and consistent strategic approach to EDI. This will include reviewing existing projects and programmes to identify areas for improvement. Guidance and templates will be shared with the network for them to adopt too. This will play an important part in ensuring EDI is not neglected at the expense of commercial or reputational considerations and ensuring that equity is given greater emphasis alongside diversity and inclusion when EDI decisions are made.

While it has not been possible to introduce gender-based budgeting into this year's Business Planning Cycle which started in August 2023, we intend to conduct further research into gender-based budgeting and how it could apply to the ECB. We are concerned that it may lead to significant ramifications for other underrepresented groups if not implemented with due consideration.

Key actions:

- Finalise Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) template by November 2023. EIA to be incorporated into the ECB's Business Planning Process and project management framework for the 2024 financial year.
- Conduct detailed research into Public Sector Equality Duty and gender-based budgeting to establish how these could apply to the ECB, to take a decision on implementation ahead of next business planning cycle.

Leadership

The ECB will adopt a more robust, transparent and accountable approach to EDI. We believe this is best served by making EDI a wider responsibility of the Leadership Group rather than a single person's responsibility (in the form of a Chief EDI Officer).

To support this intention, we have created an EDI Board sub-group that will support, challenge, and hold the executive accountable for ongoing EDI progress.

Instead of appointing a Chief EDI Officer, the responsibility will instead be led by Deputy CEO, Clare Connor, who attends all Board Meetings. The strategy development and operational delivery of EDI will be the responsibility of a permanent EDI Director, supported by an expanded EDI team which includes education experts, project management support and a role dedicated to collecting and monitoring data and insights across cricket.

Additional support and collaboration will also be drawn from the EDI subject matter experts spanning the game, including:

- The PCA and their EDI Working Group
- Charity Delivery Partners
- Cricket bodies representing diverse communities
- Organisations such as Inclusive Employers, Sporting Equals, EHRC
- Sport England and UK Sport
- EDI Leads on County Boards across the game with significant professional and academic expertise in EDI
- Our Employee Networks
- People with lived experiences of participating in or delivering cricket in diverse communities

We understand the importance of having a diverse and representative leadership team at the ECB and commit to ongoing efforts to improve the diversity of our Executive Management Team and Board. The first stage will be updated data collection given recent leadership changes, and the addition of socio-economic status, after which we will consider the longer-term targets at appropriate time horizons. We recognise the need to introduce initiatives to support that diversity in the broader leadership group. Our Future Leaders (FLEX) programme forms part of our succession planning and has been supporting top talent within the ECB for the past year through a programme that includes evaluations and assessments, coaching support, and targeted personal development. The most recent cohort was 53% female and 40% of FLEX participants have been promoted during this period.

We now have the most diverse Board in the ECB's history, with 42% female and 25% ethnic diversity. The majority of this Board were appointed in May 2023 and will serve at least three-year terms. We agree with moving towards even greater Board diversity as roles become available. We already have targets for 2025 for the ECB Board, Executive Management Team, and Directors/Heads Of (50% gender, 20% ethnic diversity).

Key actions:

- Review ECB employee data and establish development programme(s) as appropriate.

EQUITY IN WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' CRICKET

While the ICEC praised the impact of the Transforming Women's and Girls' Cricket Action Plan 2020-2024, it made a number of recommendations around how to further the progression and equity of the women's and girls' game. It said that women's and girls' cricket needed to be valued as integral to the game.

One such recommendation focused on reaching equal pay levels – with stated timelines – between men and women at domestic and international level, while the Commission also recommended both gender-based budgeting and an increase in core investment into the women's and girls' game.

In addition, the ICEC recommended that the ECB's Articles of Association should be amended to include a clear obligation to grow the women's and girls' game, and that the women's game should have equal representation within the game's governance structure.

OUR RESPONSE

We are committed to making cricket a gender-balanced sport and ensuring that sexism and misogyny is addressed alongside other discrimination.

Since launching the Transforming Women's & Girls' Cricket Action Plan 2020-2024, with the goal of enabling cricket to become a gender-balanced sport, we have taken significant strides forward as the ICEC recognised. Highlights include:

- A 75% increase in the total number of women's and girls' club teams since 2019, underpinned by ECB investment in 86 Women's & Girls' Club Development Officer roles across the network and a focus on welcoming environments.
- The establishment of a professional women's domestic game, with the number of female professional domestic players going from zero in 2019 to over 80 today. We are now building the plan with the game to have fully professional squads by 2027.
- A surge in attendances for women's cricket: more than 110,000 people attended the Metro Bank Women's Ashes in 2023 – inspired in part by the award-winning marketing campaign 'Ashes, Two Ashes', which positioned England Women's and England Men's players side by side on the biggest stage. This was 4.5 times the attendance of the 2019 series, with a further 5.3 million people watching coverage live on TV, alongside over 300,000 people also attending women's matches at The Hundred this summer.

Two of the ICEC's recommendations – the allocation of equal match fees between England Men and England Women, and equal prize money at men's and women's ICC World Cups – have been delivered already, while the women's game has enjoyed another record-breaking summer since the release of the ICEC Report.

We agree with the long-term goal of equality in pay and working conditions (conditions of employment) for female players in professional cricket.

Conditions of employment for centrally contracted England Men's and England Women's players will be made equal during the upcoming contract year (in the areas that aren't covered by other recommendations). At a domestic level, equality of conditions of employment cannot be delivered with immediate effect given the current ownership structure for the women's professional teams. This objective will be addressed through the Women's Professional Game Strategy 2025-2029 where we will develop a plan to deliver equality as quickly as possible.

Further analysis is needed before the ECB can commit to the proposed goals of the report – or an alternate timeline – for a fundamental overhaul of the professional female players' pay structure, and the ICEC's proposal on equalising salaries in The Hundred. Given financial constraints, the ECB has a responsibility to balance these recommendations against the multitude of long-term investments required to grow and nurture the game at all levels.

From inspiring girls to pick up a bat and ball, through to attracting people to attend and follow the women's game at scale, growing the demand and audience for women's cricket is crucial to creating the long-term commercial conditions, which will underpin the achievement of our pay parity goal. For all the progress we have seen, the gap between the value of commercial and media rights for the men's and women's games is still vast. By creating a thriving, viable and robust future for women's and girls' cricket at every level of the game, we can make real progress in closing that gap. To do this, within the current broadcast cycle (to 2028) we will invest a minimum of £25m per year above forecasted women's revenues to further grow the women's and girls' game at every level.

Accelerating growth in women's and girls' recreational cricket

One of the main barriers evidenced through our research for cricket clubs starting and sustaining a girls' section is a lack of volunteers. To tackle this, the ECB is partnering with Metro Bank, our new Women's and Girls' Champion partner, along with the wider cricket network. Targets for 2026 have been set which include recruiting 6,000 volunteers to grow girls' cricket across 2,000 clubs with a girls' section and at least 6,000 girls' club teams.

We are taking action to lower barriers and make women and girls feel included and supported in the fabric of the recreational game. This includes our facilities investment strategy being based around creating welcoming environments, with many clubs receiving funding to enhance their provision for women and girls.

Turbocharging the women's professional game

Domestic women's professional cricket is at an inflection point. Since the launch of the Regional Structure in 2020, there has been significant progress. Across the eight women's Regional teams there are now more than 80 full-time professional domestic players, a workforce of more than 150 coaching and support staff, and a growing fixture list with 101 Regional matches planned for the 2024 season.

Now we will further accelerate progress. Within a fast-moving environment for women's sport, we must make sure our underpinning structure and operational model for professional women's cricket is as effective and equitable as possible. Further evolution of the existing Regional Structure therefore forms the focal point in the development of a new Women's Professional Game Strategy 2025-2029.

This strategy is currently being developed in consultation with the cricket network and will be launched ready to take full effect from the 2025 season. It will address all the component parts that will feed into the future success of domestic women's cricket across England and Wales and will provide a clear and robust plan for how we will focus investment and respond to the recommendations around women's professional domestic pay in the ICEC report.

Representation in governance structures

We agree with the principle of ensuring men's and women's cricket have equal representation, priority and focus within the ECB's governance structures. A key outcome through the development of the new Women's Professional Game Strategy for 2025-2029 will be game-wide agreement for the optimal ownership and governance structure for women's professional cricket moving forwards.

As part of this, we will consider what protections the ECB might be able to put in place to ensure all ECB members (FCCs and CCBs) consider the whole game equally in their resource-allocation and decision-making (and in any formal votes as members of the ECB).

The ICEC recommended that the ECB Board should have a dedicated representative for the women's game. We do not think this is appropriate – the ECB Board does not comprise direct representation of any stakeholder. The Board is required to have a balance of skills and experience to allow it to effectively perform its duties. This includes knowledge and experience of our key stakeholders, and of men's and women's professional and recreational cricket. The Professional Game Committee and Recreational Game Committees (formal sub-committees of the ECB Board) cover both men's and women's cricket. Their Terms of Reference make it clear that men's and women's cricket are the direct and equal responsibility of these Committees. Similarly, the membership requirements make it clear both groups should have the skills and experiences required to effectively perform its duties. This includes a requirement for the group to have a balance of knowledge of men's and women's professional and recreational cricket.

Key actions

- Within the current broadcast cycle (to 2028), we will invest a minimum of £25m per year above forecasted women's revenues to further grow the women's and girls' game at every level.
- We have equalised England Women's match fees with England Men's match fees immediately.
- We will continue to accelerate match day attendances and grow the audiences for England Women to provide a catalyst for the ongoing work to seek commercial partners for the women's and girls' game, alongside positively positioning women's cricket in the next broadcast rights deal negotiation.
- In collaboration with the game, we will develop a Women's Professional Game Strategy for 2025-2029 to plot our path to sustainable domestic player pay parity in the future. This work will increase the number of domestic professional contracts for women to c.128 by 2027.
- By 2026, we will support the growth and sustainability of 2,000 clubs with a girls' section (currently 775), increase the number of girls' club teams to 6,000 (currently 1,808) and recruit 6,000 volunteers to underpin this thriving girls' club landscape to inspire the next generation.

TALENT PATHWAY

The ICEC recommended a range of changes to the structure of the Talent Pathway in order that it should be more meritocratic, inclusive, accountable, transparent and consistent, and that there should be a systematic approach across all Counties. The proposed changes included the expansion of routes onto the Talent Pathway, the removal of all direct costs for participating players, and a more systematic approach to talent identification.

OUR RESPONSE

A Talent Pathway is a vital part of performance sport. If cricket is to have the strongest possible domestic game feeding into the highest quality England teams of the future, we need to ensure it is accessible to all. High-potential young players should be able to succeed and be the best they can be, whatever their background or circumstances.

The Talent Pathway has a number of constituent parts, each with its own important role to play. This includes schools, clubs, Counties, Regional teams and national programmes, as well as the many and varied non-traditional cricketing environments and our Community Talent Champions programmes. Removing barriers of accessibility within and between each of these, and ensuring that a player's journey is as uninhibited as possible, will require a joined-up and aligned effort from all.

The ECB will work with the wider game to clarify best practice across the Talent Pathway, within an enhanced and expanded structure. This structure will be aligned to a number of key principles around access, recruitment and programme delivery, and all principles will apply to men/boys and women/girls, recognising there will likely be nuances in design and delivery, as well as the need for appropriate differentiation at a local level to meet local needs.

The fundamental aims will be to remove barriers, increase opportunity and enhance player transitions, which will contribute hugely to our drive to be the most inclusive sport in England and Wales. In order to deliver on these aims, it is crucial that the ECB and the Counties invest the right amount of time and energy into a period of focused consultation, which appropriately balances the requisite levels of rigour and urgency. Open-minded collaboration will be key.

Removing financial barriers

Our initial focus will be on ensuring that finance is not a barrier to any player being able to participate in the Talent Pathway. We agree that young people should not be prevented from playing for their County simply because of affordability reasons. Beyond that, we also want to explore with Counties what other interventions and support should be put in place. Different Counties operate different business models, and we need to better understand the impact of moving funding from other projects to simply make Pathways free for all.

Redefining the structure of the Talent Pathway

We will work with the Counties to redefine the overall structure of the Talent Pathway. This will incorporate the introduction of an early engagement stage, thereby extending the Talent Pathway, creating greater opportunity for more players to develop, prior to the County Age Group (CAG) phase.

As a result, the introduction of formal CAG cricket will be delayed. We will consult with the game to determine what age is appropriate for its commencement, ensuring effective integration with this extended Talent Pathway.

The extended Talent Pathway, notably the early engagement stage, will be shaped by the following guiding principles:

- Deliver programmes that allow for more players, more opportunity and more fluidity
- Be localised, aiming to minimise travel
- Adhere to a national development framework
- Appropriately integrate each element of the Talent Pathway, including non-traditional cricketing environments and programmes
- An emphasis on all players receiving match-play opportunities

Player recruitment

The ECB will provide direction regarding the implementation of best practice player recruitment principles and processes. This will include increasing the sources of talent, widening the breadth of nominations and ensuring that the full selection process is both rigorous and transparent. It will include guidance around engagement of coaches in player recruitment and managing conflicts of interest, as well as providing training to staff involved to help reduce bias.

We agree that we should expand how talent is sourced to ensure that players who come through non-traditional routes have the opportunity to be included. We believe that abolishing nominations from schools and clubs entirely and replacing them with open trials will be counterproductive and that the best talent recruitment processes are both longitudinal and holistic in nature. Open trials can represent a useful methodology within a broader recruitment process but delivered in isolation, would provide a somewhat narrow and limited perspective. We will therefore not be adopting this recommendation.

We will have a renewed state school focus which aligns and integrates with the State Schools Action Plan. We will work with Counties to design and deliver additional and bespoke development opportunities to existing Talent Pathway boys and girls attending state schools. At the same time, we will work towards a joined-up approach to identifying and developing talent across both the Talent Pathway and our various Charity Partners.

Requirements for successful implementation

Achieving our aims for the Talent Pathway will not be easy and will require significant investment. We will need to consider local requirements and needs to determine the right balance of unique and standardised approaches. There will be implications for Counties' business models, so we will need to understand the impact on these when considering how changes can be introduced, thus emphasising the need for close and timely collaboration with Counties.

Dedicated leadership and staffing within the game will also be an area to explore and invest, to ensure accountability is clear across the game. In addition, the use of the CPA will be critical in how this new Talent Pathway structure is implemented and monitored. For the women's and girls' game this is a key area to help ensure that the significant growth is planned, delivered and assessed in an effective manner.

As well as equitable access to the Talent Pathway, it is important that representation continues all the way to the transition to the professional game. The ECB will invest in the South Asian Cricket Academy (SACA) and African Caribbean Engagement programme (ACE) to go further in developing talent from Black and British South Asian communities. The partnership with SACA aims to address the disparity between British South Asian participation in recreational and professional cricket and help more players make their professional breakthrough. Funding will enable an expanded player showcase during the summer – with more games for a SACA First XI and regional fixtures providing a second tier of player development – as well as additional investment in winter training. Further detail on the ACE partnership is included in the Ethnically diverse communities section.

Key actions:

- Work with the wider game during winter 2023/24 to clarify best practice across the Talent Pathway. This will include an early engagement phase underpinning the formal CAG system.
- Development and implementation of best practice player recruitment principles and processes, including appeals process and guidance on engagement of coaches in selection to take effect from winter 2024/25.
- Mandatory training for scouts, coaches and selectors.
- Work with partners across the network to explore long-term Talent Pathway financing to ensure finance is not a barrier to talent pathway participation.

- Work with Counties to ensure additional and bespoke development opportunities for state school players.
- MCC Foundation to expand its network of hubs, increasing from 77 to around 150 in 2025. These will provide free-to-access training and match play to around 2,000 more young people by 2025.

STATE SCHOOLS AND CLASS BARRIERS

The ICEC recommended that the ECB puts in place, over the next 12 months, a State Schools Action Plan to be delivered in partnership with the Counties. As part of this it made some specific suggestions about how resources should be reallocated to enhance existing training and coaching provision in primary schools (years 5 and 6) and fill the gap in secondary school provision (years 7 and 8), including increased investment in Chance to Shine opportunities and partnerships with local cricket clubs.

The ICEC also recommended that the ECB undertakes, within the same timeframe, an in-depth examination of the class barriers that exist within cricket and develops a game-wide strategy to remove them.

OUR RESPONSE

Cricket is one of a number of sports included on the national PE curriculum, which empowers schools to choose whichever sports are most suited to them. The Government does not prescribe which sports must be taught, but the Chief Medical Officer encourages at least 60 minutes of physical activity for pupils each day. Government provides additional funding for schools via the School Premium, which is designed to improve PE provision through by focusing on staff competence, pupil engagement and competition.

The current approach to empower schools locally means that direct interventions to boost cricket in state schools is challenging. Some levers that do exist, such as delivery from the School Games Organisers (SGOs) are broad and overarching, with cricket being one of 45 sports delivered by SGOs.

Increasing access to cricket in state schools

The ECB currently invests approximately £4m per year to support the delivery of cricket in state schools, reaching 670,000 children across 7,500 schools, working with every County Cricket Board across England and Wales.

We are committed to further increasing access to cricket in state schools, and to ensuring children from state schools can progress in the game. This is an area of work which will need input from a range of different partners, including Government. As the ICEC recognises, it is not something that the ECB and the Counties can address fully on their own.

State Schools Action Plan

Over the next 12 months, we will develop a State Schools Action Plan as the ICEC recommends. The scope of this is currently being developed, but is expected to include:

- Ways to increase the number of state primary and secondary school students playing cricket, especially those from lower socio-economic groups (LSEG) and the social impact of achieving this
- How to support talented state school players better
- Improving access for state school students to cricket facilities, training and coaching, competitions etc.

The State Schools Action Plan will consider both primary and secondary age state school students.

Once the State Schools Action Plan has been developed, we anticipate there will then be a phased approach to delivery beginning in the 2024/25 academic year. We will ensure this is properly resourced with appropriate funding, leadership and on-the-ground support. Where Counties are responsible for delivering elements of the plan, this will be reflected through KPIs in the County Partnership Agreement (CPA).

Reaching students most in need of support

Our priority is to focus on those state schools with students most in need of support. Using the data-led approach of our current schools' strategy work, we will continue to target students from LSEG by using Government data to identify schools with the highest percentages of students eligible for free school meals (those with 40%+ students eligible), and students at Special Educational Needs and Disability Schools (SEND).

During the last academic year (2022/23), we increased our investment in our long-standing partnerships with Chance to Shine and Lord's Taverners that target these priority groups, and we will expand both initiatives.

- Our partnership with Chance to Shine funds the delivery of cricket in around 4,000 state primary schools. Last academic year we expanded this significantly to reach an additional 300 'high free school meals' schools and 38,000 students. Over the next two years, we will expand the programme further, offering up to 20,000 more children in another 150 targeted schools the opportunity to play cricket per year.
- Our partnership with Lord's Taverners funds the delivery of cricket in schools for individuals with disabilities and special educational needs. Last academic year, through increased funding, cricket was delivered in an additional 400 SEND schools, benefitting 13,000 more children. Over the next two years we will expand the programme to a further 200 schools, reaching another 7,000 children.

Access to Talent Pathway for state school players

While the State Schools Action Plan will examine how the delivery of cricket in state schools can be increased, we do not believe there are currently sufficient coaching resources in the County Talent Pathway to deliver a comprehensive coaching programme in state schools (as recommended by the ICEC). Therefore, the State Schools Action Plan will consider the role of Counties in providing additional development opportunities to existing pre-County Age Group and County Age Group players from state schools in order to remove barriers to state school children accessing talent pathways.

As an immediate step to improving access to Talent Pathways for state school children, the ECB will launch a partnership with the MCC Foundation for the first time to expand its network of Hubs. These focus on talent development, helping promising youngsters who have been engaged through mass participation activities or non-traditional formats to join cricket clubs, develop their hard-ball skills, and access the formal talent pathways. The Hubs also have a transformational impact off the cricket pitch, helping participants to feel happier and more confident, and improving their focus and performance at school, including access to mentors for all participants.

New funding from the ECB, along with funding from the MCC, will help to double the number of Hubs to around 150 by 2025, with at least one Hub in every County, including in some of the hardest to reach communities. These will provide free-to-access training and match-play to over 5,000 state-educated secondary school students.

As well as increasing the number of Hubs, the MCC Foundation will also invest in the quality and depth of the programme, providing participants with extensive match play opportunities, an increased winter coaching programme, and national competitions for all ages with finals at Lord's.

Engagement with Government

The ECB will continue to work closely with Government on our shared agenda to increase sports provision in state schools. As the ICEC suggests, we are exploring how better sharing of data can help to build a clearer picture of where there is greatest need, and how our interventions can have most impact. The Government is collecting new data around schools' use of the PE Premium, and we continue to work with both the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Department for Education (DfE) to analyse this data through a cricket-focused lens.

In addition, we are working with Government to encourage more independent schools to open their facilities to the local community, including local state schools. We want to reach as many independent schools as possible and will work with the Counties to drive this agenda locally.

Removing class barriers

We are committed to understanding and addressing class barriers and intend to do this across a number of pieces of work. Understanding and tackling class barriers to participation will be at the heart of our State Schools Action Plan. Understanding barriers to realising potential will be central to how we approach the Talent Pathway; while the ECB's EDI Action Plan will consider how class barriers show up in other areas, for example workforce, and how we address those.

Key actions:

- Develop State Schools Action Plan over the next 12 months, with phased delivery from 2024/25 academic year.
- Extend existing schools initiatives with Chance to Shine and Lord's Taverners to reach around 27,000 more students each year in around 350 schools (on top of already substantial expansion in 2022/23), with focus on LSEG and SEND schools.
- Establish new partnership with the MCC Foundation to double the number of Hubs, opening up access to talent pathways for more than 5,000 state-educated secondary school students.
- Ensure ongoing engagement with Government to promote increased provision of cricket in schools, informed by sharing data on where the greatest impact can be made.
- Work with Government to encourage more independent schools to open their facilities to the local community.
- Consider further actions to remove class-based barriers and encourage participation by lower socio-economic groups, with work to be integrated into further development of the ECB EDI Action Plan.

ETHNICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

The ICEC reported that there had been a significant decline in the participation of Black communities in cricket since the 1970s and 1980s and expressed criticism of what it described as a failure to understand and take action to reverse this trend. It recommended that the ECB should adopt a targeted and evidence-based approach, similar to that taken with South Asian communities through the South Asian Action Plan (SAAP). In addition, the ICEC called for extensive engagement with stakeholders from Black communities to help with the development of the future strategic approach.

OUR RESPONSE

The ECB recognises that there is much to be done in order to engage more effectively with Black communities, promote participation at all levels and support players into the professional game. This work has already started in recent years. This includes having provided financial support to the African Caribbean Engagement (ACE) Programme, working with the African Caribbean Cricket Association (ACCA) to fund projects to improve cricket clubs in Black communities and providing targeted bursaries to support Black and other ethnically diverse people through coaching qualifications. We have also supported showcase events that celebrate the culture and community surrounding cricket in Black communities, such as the African Caribbean Cricket Festival held in Northamptonshire this summer.

We are committed to building on these initial steps, as well as maintaining our focus on other underserved, ethnically diverse communities.

Developing a strategic Action Plan

As the ICEC acknowledged, the SAAP has demonstrated that a series of evidence-based, targeted interventions can deliver meaningful progress in underserved communities, including increased diversity in the Talent Pathway, improvements in infrastructure and also grassroots engagement. We intend to both build on the positive results achieved in South Asian communities and extend our approach to Black communities. We recognise that targeted work on the inclusion of all ethnically diverse communities, and particularly those with a deep history and affinity for cricket, can only serve the sport well in the long-term. We agree that there has been a long neglect of cricket in Black communities, but our hope is that we can start to remedy that whilst also building on the good progress within South Asian communities.

Over recent months we have engaged in extensive and broad consultation with people who have direct experience of grassroots cricket in Black communities, such as ACCA and ACE, to gain their insight on how to tackle the challenges. Former England player, Devon Malcolm, now works in a dual role between officiating and our EDI Team supporting engagement with the Black cricket community, helping us reach more cricket clubs and providing important feedback. We have also worked with the National Asian Cricket Council (NACC), our Diverse Communities Advisory Panel and met with the 'Spirit of Cricket' group, as well as experts from outside the game such as Kick It Out.

Through this period of consultation, the clear feedback from stakeholders is that we should avoid creating a series of standalone plans that consider the needs of communities separately. Instead, their guidance is that we should bring together our work focused on ethnically diverse communities through a comprehensive, joined-up approach that takes account of intersectional analysis and commonalities between communities, whilst allowing for specific interventions which may be required for different groups.

Therefore, we will work over the next 12 months to develop a Diverse Communities Action Plan. This will include specific actions focused on Black communities, addressing the needs and challenges identified through further analysis. It will also consider how to maintain progress among South Asian communities, building on the activity delivered so far through the SAAP and addressing any gaps or emerging challenges. Additionally, the Diverse Communities Action Plan will examine where there is

scope to direct investment and support in a way that meets the needs of multiple communities, for example installing facilities and pitches in inner-city locations.

As with the creation of the SAAP in 2018, the Diverse Communities Action Plan will be based on a comprehensive development process combining robust research, analysis and data collection, together with extensive consultation. As part of this work, we will look at the ECB and its national partners' current activity and how it compares to census data on Black communities, to identify and prioritise under-served locations. We acknowledge also that an important part of this activity is building trust with all underserved communities and that it will take time to do this.

Throughout the development of the plan, we will continue to listen to the perspectives of diverse communities and engage with stakeholder groups such as ACCA and NACC. During the development period and beyond, the action plan will also benefit from expert input and challenge from the ECB's proposed independent EDI Advisory Panel, which will bring in-depth expertise and independent perspective. For further details, see Chapter 10 – Accountability and Transparency.

By undertaking this robust process, our aim is to produce a strategic and comprehensive plan that will deliver a meaningful impact for Black and other ethnically diverse communities. Alongside this, we are taking further immediate steps.

ACE partnership

We are expanding our work with ACE, which will become an official Charity Partner with guaranteed funding for three years to support its activity in six cities and expand to more London boroughs. This will support young people from Black communities to play cricket and access the talent pathway, formalising our work together into an official partnership. Through this partnership the team aims to engage over 42,000 young people from Black communities. We are working with ACE to deliver free All Stars and Dynamos courses within ACE communities.

South Asian Cricket Academy

The ECB will be partnering with the South Asian Cricket Academy (SACA) for the first time to address the gap between British South Asian participation in recreational and professional cricket. SACA has already been successful in providing a platform for cricketers who had previously missed out on professional contracts and the new funding will allow this work to be widened to reach more players.

Facilities

We currently work with several Black-led cricket clubs providing facilities, club development and club assets. We will continue to do this as well as identifying other potential clubs. Schemes already earmarked include Leicester and Coventry Caribbean Cricket Club pavilion projects. We have also tasked each County Board with developing its own facilities strategy focusing on Black communities, to ensure that clubs are getting the facilities and support they need to develop and thrive.

Core Cities and NACC

We will expand the delivery focus of our "Core Cities" programme, which was initially set up with Sport England as part of the SAAP. Focused on 13 urban areas, we work with partners to establish sustainable pathways for children, to engage young people, adults, and communities, and to use cricket to make a difference, break barriers and make lifelong connections. From 2024, we will expand its focus to increase engagement with Black communities, supporting delivery through the County Boards with funding, training, and sharing of best practice.

We will continue to work with the NACC, an advisory body whose aim is to support the ECB and Counties to better engage with South Asian cricket communities. We have worked together with good impact since the inception of Core Cities, and intend to continue this.

Key actions:

- Develop the Diverse Communities Action Plan over the next 12 months.

- Expand the “Core Cities” programme during the 2024 season to increase engagement with Black communities.
- Establish new partnership agreement with ACE, providing funding for six locations and expansion to further London boroughs.
- Form a partnership with SACA to support the progression of more Asian cricketers into the professional game.

REGULATION

The ECB is responsible for regulating cricket in England and Wales. As part of this, it sets the regulations in a number of areas such as anti-discrimination, anti-corruption, anti-doping, misconduct and safeguarding. It also deals with case management including carrying out the investigations in relation to alleged breaches in the professional game and prosecutions where relevant.

Like all other major sports in England and Wales, the regulatory work on cases relating to discrimination is carried out by the ECB alongside its other functions as a national governing body.

The ICEC recommended the ECB takes steps towards greater independence of the regulatory function, establishing a new separate body and doing this alongside reviews of regulations and laws to support in addressing complaints through the function of the adjudication body (Cricket Discipline Commission).

OUR RESPONSE

The ECB will establish a new Cricket Regulator which will be overseen by an independent Cricket Regulatory Board. The Cricket Regulator will be responsible for enforcement in relation to the game's adherence to the regulations and will also be responsible for monitoring compliance with those regulations and areas of education.

The Cricket Regulator will be ring-fenced from the rest of the ECB and will report to the Cricket Regulatory Board rather than the ECB Board. There will be no line management from those within the Cricket Regulator to others in the ECB.

The independent Cricket Regulatory Board will have budget authority for the Cricket Regulator and will be accountable for its activity and expenditure. Members of the current ECB Regulatory Committee will become the first Board members, and future Board members will be filled through open recruitment. The Cricket Regulator will be in place for the 2024 season.

The remit of the Cricket Regulator will include matters of anti-discrimination, anti-corruption, anti-doping, misconduct and safeguarding.

Each year an independent assurance process will be carried out – by a body such as Sport Resolutions – to confirm that there has been no involvement in regulatory cases handled by the Cricket Regulator by ECB personnel outside of the Cricket Regulator. This will serve to give confidence that the Cricket Regulator is operating independently of the other areas of the ECB with no interference in the conduct of cases.

The Cricket Discipline Commission will be repurposed as the Cricket Discipline Panel. The next Chair of the Cricket Discipline Panel will be appointed by the ECB Board through an open recruitment process with expert external support. That Chair will then appoint the rest of the members of the Cricket Discipline Panel ensuring that the members have the appropriate range of skills and diversity. The next Chair and Panel members should be appointed for a four-year term and serve a maximum of two terms. The Cricket Discipline Panel will have appropriate administrative support to assist it in its role. The ECB will consider any further changes to the Cricket Discipline Panel's jurisdiction and sanctioning powers.

The decisions of the Cricket Discipline Panel will be published online, as has been the case with the Cricket Discipline Commission, except where the Panel determine there is reason not to.

We agree that there should be no discrimination on the basis of socio-economic status, however given it is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act, further time is needed to consider how this could practically be implemented. The Anti-Discrimination Code will explicitly include victimisation as an offence which can lead to disciplinary action. The Anti-Discrimination Code applies across the game to ensure that there is a single set of regulations in relation to this area. Guidance on the Anti-Discrimination Code will be further developed to assist in understanding what discrimination is and conduct that can amount to an offence. Further guidance will also be provided in relation to the disciplinary process which is carried in relation to such matters.

We agree that leaders of cricketing organisations and match officials should uphold high standards of behaviour and following the ICEC recommendation there will be a reporting obligation introduced in relation to discrimination. The ECB will consider who the reporting obligation should apply to. Also as recommended, rules which are non-regulatory in nature will be renamed so as to not be called regulations, with regulations covering matters of discipline and integrity.

Key actions:

- The Cricket Regulator will be set up and ring-fenced from the ECB. They will be responsible for dealing with regulatory cases. This will be operational prior to the start of the 2024 season.
- The Cricket Regulator will report to the independent Cricket Regulatory Board with no reporting lines to the ECB Board.
- An external independent annual assurance process will take place each year to confirm that there has been no involvement in regulatory cases handled by the Cricket Regulator by ECB personnel outside of the Cricket Regulator.
- The Cricket Discipline Commission will be repurposed as the Cricket Discipline Panel. The next Chair of the Cricket Discipline Panel will be appointed through an open process with that Chair then appointing the remaining panel members.
- The Anti-Discrimination Code will explicitly include victimisation as an offence.
- A reporting obligation will be introduced in relation to discrimination.

TACKLING DISCRIMINATION

The ICEC report highlighted that it has not always been easy for people to report experiences of discrimination in cricket, and when they have, their complaints have not always been dealt with appropriately. The ICEC made a number of recommendations to address this, such as setting clear expectations of accountability for leaders and match officials, provision of centralised training and specialised support for all cricket organisations (including leagues and clubs) so that they are properly equipped to deal with formal and informal complaints relating to discrimination.

In addition, the ICEC recommended that the ECB reports annually on the number of complaints received in the professional and recreational games, overall outcomes and actions taken to address existing and emerging patterns of concern.

OUR RESPONSE

Anti-Discrimination Unit

As part of cricket's 12-Point Plan to tackle discrimination and promote equity, diversity and inclusion (first published in November 2021), the ECB committed to establishing a dedicated Anti-Discrimination Unit (ADU), which has been in place since October 2022.

The ADU provides specialist resources and expertise to support cricket organisations in tackling discrimination and handling complaints. It advises on best practice and appropriate processes to ensure consistency across the game and collates and analyses data to drive understanding of the scale and scope of the issue and effectiveness of the response.

Over the next 12 months, as part of its work to develop a comprehensive strategy to go further and faster in tackling discrimination, the ADU will address the concerns raised by the ICEC around reporting and tackling cases of discrimination.

Specialist support

Over the past 18 months, the ECB has been providing specialist external resource to support cricket organisations to manage cases of discrimination. This support will continue for the foreseeable future, until other suitable arrangements are put in place.

Two regional 12-month pilots are currently underway, facilitated by the ADU, to examine how best to support the recreational game in future. These pilots, together with a broader network consultation, will help the ECB to understand and develop the appropriate processes and support structures for the game. The aim of this work is to ensure consistent, effective handling of discrimination cases across the recreational game and develop increased levels of confidence among complainants that their cases will be managed appropriately.

Individual and organisational responsibility

A key element of the work of the ADU is to drive cultural change, setting clear expectations for individual and organisational responsibility for tackling discrimination, and accountability for results.

To better aid the handling of complaints across cricket, the Boundary Programme, training led by the ADU, will be rolled out across the whole network from 2024 onwards building on an initial pilot earlier this year. The aim of the programme is to support the Counties in their confidence and ability to recognise discrimination, how to manage complaints and encourage reporting.

Another key focus is on improved communication with complainants, so that people understand how their complaint will be managed, and are kept updated and supported through the process. As part of this, the ECB will shortly launch a customer charter which will set out clear expectations of both the individual and investigator body to ensure a fair and transparent outcome for all involved.

While the ECB recognises the need for greater consistency in how complaints are handled across the game, we do not believe that complaint handling can or should be entirely centralised. It is important that it is as easy as possible for people to share complaints and that individual cricket organisations are accountable and are encouraged, supported and empowered to tackle discrimination themselves.

Education and training

An initial round of ECB-led training has already been provided to all cricket organisations, targeted at individuals with key responsibilities to respond to discrimination when it occurs. Further education and training initiatives will be developed and delivered over the next 12 months as part of the ECB's broader EDI strategy.

Data and systems

Data and systems are critical to ensuring the ECB has a comprehensive and accurate picture of discrimination across the game, enabling analysis of common themes and development of tailored responses. A national reporting system is already in place, and this will be supplemented soon with a new case management system which will give us data and insights to provide an improved game-wide view of discrimination. This will assist in sharing lessons learned, and enable us to deliver consistency across the game. Building on experiences in safeguarding, it will help to identify trends that are happening, identify resource requirements and inform our proactive approach as we develop our strategy.

As the ICEC recommends, the ECB will report publicly on data around complaints on an annual basis, alongside other EDI metrics.

Key actions:

- The ECB's Anti-Discrimination Unit, established in October 2022, will continue to focus on providing specialist support to the game. Next year we will develop a longer-term strategy to further tackle discrimination, building on the work we are already doing.
- Complete delivery of regional pilots and undertake network consultation to establish the best way to provide support and structure for the recreational game in future. Pilots reviewed at end of 2024 season.
- Launch 'Customer charter' for 2024 season to set clear expectations for how complaints should be handled to ensure a fair and transparent outcome for all.
- Further to delivery of first round of training to help network understand discrimination and manage complaints, further education initiatives for all cricket organisations will be developed in line with broader EDI work over the next 12 months.
- Establish new case management system in 2024 to enhance existing national reporting, enabling analysis and reporting of trends.

GOVERNANCE

The ICEC set out a range of proposed changes to strengthen the governance of cricket and ensure that its structures and systems are operating in a way that promotes the delivery of EDI across the game. These recommendations included: several amendments to the ECB's Articles of Association, greater emphasis on EDI in the selection of venues for high-profile matches, enhanced EDI standards for County organisations, and stronger sanctions for non-compliance, along with public reporting of organisations' performance.

OUR RESPONSE

ECB Articles of Association

The ECB is in full agreement with the ICEC's views on the importance of good governance and leadership in sports administration at both a national and local level. Significant progress has been made in this area over the past five years, both at the ECB and across the wider game.

The ECB adopted the Sport England Code of Governance in 2017/18 and has gone further than the Code's requirements by introducing an independent Board with no member-elected Directors and no Directors with a retained position on member organisations.

As part of the ECB's focus on developing a strong and diverse Board, we have appointed several new Directors since the ICEC closed its evidence collection. At present, the ECB Board is composed of 42% women and 25% individuals from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

To further strengthen cricket's governance arrangements, we will put forward a number of proposed amendments to the ECB Articles of Association to reflect our role and responsibilities in relation to EDI. The proposed changes, which are subject to legal review and approval via a member vote, will include:

- Updating the fundamental "Objects" of the ECB to include: "promoting and delivering EDI in professional and recreational cricket"
- Adding a new reference to promoting the interests of under-represented groups in cricket. This will not be limited to women and girls (as recommended by the ICEC) but will also include ethnically diverse communities, disabled people, and those from lower socio-economic groups
- Revising the wording of the Articles aimed at trying to ensure that the spirit and traditions of cricket do not promote exclusionary behaviour
- Removing the annual reappointment of Directors (subject to ongoing mechanisms that deal with any serious concerns about conduct)

Venues for high-profile matches

The ECB is committed to ensuring that all professional cricket venues provide a welcoming and inclusive environment. In parallel with the publication of the game-wide plan to tackle discrimination in November 2021, the ECB introduced enhanced EDI standards for all venues and has subsequently worked with Counties to review the inclusivity of their facilities.

Following this process, the ECB made available £2.5 million of funding to improve provision for families and under-served communities. This investment enabled the completion of 33 infrastructure projects at 19 venues, including the provision of alcohol-free areas, multi-faith rooms, family toilets, changing facilities, accessible seating sections and sensory rooms.

While the ECB has already completed the allocation of major matches through to 2031, we intend to achieve the same outcome as the ICEC's recommendation by making revised, mandatory EDI standards an important part of the hosting contract with each venue. These standards will include:

- Reporting of and action taken in respect of anti-social or discriminatory behaviour
- Quality and effectiveness of stewarding
- Administration of alcohol-free areas
- Operation of facilities linked to the Welcoming Environments initiative e.g., accessibility, faith rooms, food provision etc

Venues will be assessed against these standards on an annual basis with recommendations and requirements shared with the respective County organisation. Through an interim review in 2027, the ECB will have the ability to adjust the allocations from 2028-2031 if there is evidence of non-compliance.

Minimum standards in County Partnership Agreements

In 2020, the ECB introduced County Partnership Agreements (legal funding agreements) for its County stakeholders. For the first time, these included mandatory minimum standards relating to - amongst other things - EDI, safeguarding and governance (via the County Governance Framework).

We agree with the ICEC's recommendation that the existing minimum standards should be strengthened and are currently working with the game on a new CPA to come into effect from February 2025. We are proposing (subject to consultation) that revised standards will include new EDI targets requirements for County organisations to have, or have access to, dedicated HR and EDI expertise, as well as a new CPA standard to ensure the collection and monitoring of EDI data at County organisations.

While the exact requirements and timeframes for implementation are subject to ongoing consultation with the game, where possible we will look to introduce revised standards from January 2024 under the existing CPA contracts. Where this is not possible, we would expect them to be adopted from January 2025 in line with the next funding cycle. In either case, County organisations will be given an appropriate, but ambitious, period to implement the new requirements.

The ICEC recommended a strengthening of the sanctions related to minimum EDI standards, and for organisations to report on compliance against these standards. We believe the existing sanctions (including being able to withhold up to 100% of ECB funding distributions) are sufficient. Inherent in the principles of the CPA is that it is intended to help Counties improve standards, with sanctions being a measure of last resort, only following formal notice of potential non-compliance and failure of an action plan to deliver change. Similarly, we do not intend to start reporting on live cases of potential non-compliance, but we will continue to report publicly on any sanctions relating to CPA breaches.

We will work with the game to strengthen our shared understanding of EDI data and insights throughout the network. We will do this by establishing clear data reporting requirements within the next version of the CPA, which will help us understand the impact of our actions, as well as demonstrate progress.

County Governance Framework

We propose to strengthen the existing County Governance Framework (CGF), which has helped to drive improvement in governance structures and processes across the game.

We will consult with Counties on a series of enhancements to the mandatory Bronze and Silver tiers of the Framework including new diversity targets. We will also consider if the Gold Tier of the CGF should become mandatory for all FCCs/CCBs as part of the next CPA. A "Gold Accreditation Scheme" - initially rolled out on a voluntary basis - would be introduced to independently confirm a County's compliance with the Gold Tier.

To further strengthen cricket's governance, we also intend to extend the range of ECB support and guidance available to County organisations from 2024 including:

- The provision of Board training on "inclusive leadership" and "creating high performing, inclusive Boards"
- A structured ECB Induction Programme for County non-executive directors (NEDs) and Chairs
- The creation of support networks for NEDs across the game
- Support for independent, external Board evaluations (Gold tier requirement)
- Continued provision of recruitment support, focused primarily on Chair/CEO recruitment

EDI targets

The introduction of the CPA, together with associated support, monitoring and threat of sanctions, has driven progress across the game in recent years. In particular, while acknowledging the need for continued improvement, the composition of FCC and CCB Boards has diversified significantly, with female representation increasing from 11% in 2019 to 34% today and ethnic diversity increasing from 5% to 19%.

The effectiveness of the CGF has served to emphasise the role that targets can play in diversifying Board membership. However, we recognise that it can be impractical to balance multiple targets across different characteristics while also retaining a fair, skills-based recruitment process, particularly with the relatively small size of most County Boards.

Therefore, we plan to introduce a range of measures to promote continued diversification:

- County organisations will be asked, under the existing CGF, to update their ethnicity targets to reflect 2021 UK census data. We will consider an additional requirement that each County should have a minimum of one Board member from ethnically diverse communities, even if this is in excess of their local demographics
- We will propose a revised gender diversity target so that each Board should have a minimum of 40% female and 40% male Directors. This approach (rather than a blunt 50% target) is intended to be both practical (for example allowing for an odd number of Board members or occasional Board changes) and inclusive, allowing the inclusion of non-binary members
- We will collect data on socio-economic status, disability, age, and LGBTQ+ representation through the 2023 game-wide EDI census and will look to report on these at a national level to show the broad diversity across leadership
- Further to the collection of socio-economic data (e.g., schooling, parental occupation, LSEG background), we will consider if it is appropriate to introduce additional targets

For diversity in the most senior leadership positions across cricket, we believe that setting collective targets is impractical given that each individual organisation can only influence decision-making and appointments within their own organisation. Instead, we will focus on initiatives to improve the pipeline of candidates for senior roles, for example with recruitment support funded by the ECB, increased emphasis on succession planning and development of talent from underrepresented groups. Additionally, on an annual basis, we will report publicly on the collective diversity at a Chair/CEO level across the game.

County Membership

The ECB agrees with the ICEC’s finding on the benefits that would come from increasing the diversity and inclusivity of Clubs and ensuring that decision-making focuses on the interests of all cricket supporters. The breadth of cricket products (LV= Insurance County Championship, Vitality T20 Blast, Metro Bank One Day Cup, the Charlotte Edwards Cup, the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy, The Hundred, international cricket) and associated audiences is a huge strength of cricket, and Counties such as Surrey and Warwickshire are already attracting a larger and more diverse membership base.

We will work with the County clubs to both measure and monitor current diversity levels and co-create a framework of guidance and best practice from across the game to help County clubs strengthen their work in this area. Once baseline data has been established, we will consider with the game the potential benefits of targets.

For CCBs, we will continue to provide financial incentives focused on improving diversity and inclusion within the recreational game. This will include measures such as the number of women’s and girls’ clubs/sections/teams, and the diversity of participants within national programmes.

Key actions:

Articles of Association

- Bring forward proposed changes to Articles of Association for approval by members.

High-profile matches

- Revise and strengthen EDI standards for venues hosting high-profile matches.
- Incorporate requirement to meet new EDI standards in 2025 contracts with host venues and monitor compliance on annual basis.

Minimum standards in County Partnership Agreements

- Develop revised and strengthened minimum standards in consultation with County organisations.
- Introduce new standards from January 2024 (where possible) or January 2025 with appropriate timeframe for implementation.

County Governance Framework

- Develop enhanced Bronze/Silver tiers in consultation with Counties for introduction from January 2025.
- Increase level of support and guidance provided by the ECB to County organisations from January 2024.

EDI targets

- Introduce revised ethnicity targets for Boards of County organisations to reflect 2021 UK census data from January 2024.
- Introduce revised gender diversity target for County Boards.
- Collect data on socio-economic, disability, age, and LGBTQ+ representation through the 2023 game-wide census and publish findings at national level.
- Subject to findings of data collection, consider introduction of additional targets based on socio-economic metrics.
- Provide support to Counties to improve pipeline of candidates for senior leadership roles and report annually on collective Chair/CEO diversity at national level.

Counties

- Promote diversity and inclusion within recreational game through introduction of new financial incentive for CCBs from January 2025 (subject to consultation with Counties).

HOW WE WILL MONITOR AND REPORT ON PROGRESS

The ICEC made several recommendations concerning accountability and transparency in its report. These related to how the ECB monitors and reports on progress in EDI, our response to the ICEC report itself, and external scrutiny of our performance.

OUR RESPONSE

Accountability and transparency are fundamental tenets of how the ECB operates. We have reported publicly on our progress in EDI across the last two years, sharing an EDI Action Plan update as well as the independent assessments of our work on the game-wide commitments by EY.

We recognise there is an ongoing requirement to ensure the ECB is accountable with regards to the game's progress. We are committed to reporting consistently on key metrics and communicating the game's progress in its journey to become more equitable, diverse and inclusive.

Reporting on our performance

We will monitor our performance every year and publish the key results. In addition, we will publish a detailed report on the State of Equity in Cricket every three years.

As the basis for the detailed report, we will use Chapter 4 of the ICEC Report. It will report on the key relevant metrics, plus additional ones where relevant. These metrics will cover:

Equity

- Ethnicity and gender pay gaps
- Domestic and international salaries, prize money and match fees ratios
- Perceptions of cricket as a gender-balanced sport

Diversity

- Of leadership (CEOs, Chairs, and Board Directors across the game)
- Of our paid workforce across ECB and the Network
- Of the recreational game, talent pathway and professional game

Inclusion

- Differences in inclusion scores between key demographics (e.g., men and women) - the 'inclusion gap' - defined as feeling welcome, valued, and respected.
- Reporting on discrimination

Independent oversight

We recognise the importance of oversight of our work. We already have in place strong accountability via our EDI Board Sub-Group, which includes independent Board members.

In publishing the State of Equity in Cricket report in 2026, we will commission an independent review of progress.

To provide further independent perspectives and expertise to help us become the most inclusive sport, we will establish an EDI Advisory Panel with a wide range of expertise. This will help us to ensure that our investments and initiatives are having the intended impact.

Key actions:

- Publish an annual update on progress against our EDI commitments, including key metrics outlined in this chapter.
- Publish State of Equity in Cricket report in 2026, using Chapter 4 of the ICEC Report as a baseline.
- During 2023 we will set up the EDI Advisory Panel. Our ambition would be to have them in place for new financial year.