

Women's Football Taskforce
Tuesday 11 February 11:00 - 12:30
100 Parliament Street

Women's Football Taskforce - Attendees

Government

- Stephanie Peacock MP, Minister for Sport, Media, Civil Society and Youth

Women's Football Taskforce - members

- Nikki Doucet, CEO, WPLL
- Audrey Cooper, Head of Performance & Development, WPLL
- Joanna Manning Cooper, Director of Marketing, Communications and Public Affairs, FA
- Andrew Mitchell, Senior Public Affairs and Policy Manager, FA
- Patrick Coyle, Chief Operating Officer, Professional Footballers' Association (PFA)
- Ben Wright, Director of External Affairs, PFA
- Sue Hough, Chair, Women's National League (WNL)
- Nick Frith, Women's Leagues Operations Senior Manager (WNL)

Independent Representatives

- Karen Carney OBE, Former professional footballer and Chair of the Independent Review of Women's Football
- Kelly Simmons OBE, Sport Consultant and Board Advisor
- Jo Maher, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Sport at Loughborough University

Actions:

1. **The WPLL to establish funding for a player union and associated support from the start of the 2025/6 season.**
2. **The WPLL to work with the FA to draft a handbook to provide clarity to players on where to seek advice on player welfare matters, including transparency on club parental policies, to be circulated to players ahead of the 2025/26 season.**
3. **The WPLL to share further ideas with DCMS for generating more investment into the women's football pyramid that will fund increases in minimum player welfare standards.**
4. **Jo Maher to lead a working group to discuss the impact/advantages of working with the insurance sector to improve insurance products in women's sport.**
5. **DCMS officials to continue to work with the Women's National League and Football Foundation to support access to existing funds for teams in the Women's National League.**

Meeting Minutes

AGENDA ITEM 1: Introductory remarks from Minister for Sport

- The Minister for Sport welcomed members to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance and commitment to women's football.

- The Minister outlined the intention for the Women's Football Taskforce, with deep dives into different recommendations following the Carney Review.
- The Minister thanked and paid tribute to Karen Carney OBE for her work on the Review and reiterated the importance of driving forward the recommendations.

AGENDA ITEM 2: Overviews and updates from organisations on player welfare

- Organisations provided an overview on their work on player welfare.
- There was a discussion on the need to pass learnings between different leagues and organisations to ensure that benefits are spread across the whole football pyramid.
- There was a discussion on the importance of independent helplines to enable whistleblowing, with clear responsibilities in place so that players know who to approach on welfare issues.

AGENDA ITEM 3: Unionisation

- Attendees provided an update on the current state of play in regards to unionisation.
- The Minister for Sport reflected on the positive action underway to protect players working in professional football.
- **Action 1: The WPLL to establish funding for a player union and associated support from the start of the 2025/6 season.**

AGENDA ITEM 4: Transition of the Women's Professional Game from the FA to the WPLL

- There was a discussion on the importance of clear roles and responsibilities to ensure appropriate support in the new environment. Football authorities updated on the progress and the plans to produce a handbook to signpost resources and ensure information is easily accessible.
- The importance of independent resources was also noted to ensure that players feel comfortable discussing aspects of their wellbeing and welfare without negative consequences to their career - for example when seeking out clarity on parental policies at club level.
- The Minister for Sport thanked organisations for their work in this space, and reiterated the importance of clear signposting to resources and information.
- **Action 2: The WPLL to work with the FA to draft a handbook to provide clarity to players on where to seek advice on player welfare matters, including transparency on club parental policies, to be circulated to players ahead of the 2025/26 season.**

AGENDA ITEM 5: Bridging the gap of player welfare standards between and within leagues

- Organisations raised challenges in regards to facilities and their impact on player welfare, as well as outlining the importance of ongoing engagement between tiers around uplifts to minimum standards across the pyramid.
- There was a discussion on how increasing investment can support the football pyramid in funding increasing uplifts in player welfare.
- **Action 3: The WPLL to share further details with DCMS for generating more investment into the women's football pyramid that will fund increases in minimum player welfare standards.**

- There was a discussion on the plans to establish a working group to look at bespoke insurance products for players with the intention of derisking investment into player welfare.
- **Action 4: Jo Maher to lead a working group to discuss the impact/advantages of working with the insurance sector to improve insurance products in women's sport.**
- The Minister for Sport welcomed the collaboration between individuals in the room towards the combined goal of enhancing levels of player welfare across the women's football pyramid.
- **Action 5: DCMS officials to continue to work with the Women's National League and Football Foundation to support access to existing funds for teams in the Women's National League.**

AGENDA ITEM 6: Closing remarks

- The Minister for Sport closed the discussion by thanking attendees for their ongoing commitment to supporting women's football and sport.
- There was a commitment and request to all stakeholders to remain cognisant of the importance of bringing diversity of thought and experience to all meetings, and to endeavour to ensure the taskforce is representative of the communities it serves.
- There was a commitment to share minutes on gov.uk and to continue to work together in implementing the recommendations of the Carney Review.