

**ICEC**

Independent  
Commission for  
Equity in Cricket

# HOLDING UP A MIRROR TO CRICKET

A Report by the  
Independent Commission  
for Equity in Cricket

Forewords & Executive Summary

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June 2023



Chair and Commissioners of the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket.  
Left to right: Michelle Moore, Sir Brendan Barber, Cindy Butts (Chair), Dr Michael Collins and Zafar Ansari.  
Commissioner Biographies are set out at Appendix 2.

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## Disclaimer

This Report has been prepared by the Chair and Commissioners of the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket. The views expressed are those of the authors alone.

Some of the information and language used in this Report is potentially distressing.



## Foreword by The Right Honourable Sir John Major KG CH

I warmly welcomed the decision to establish The Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket. Although I have no prior knowledge of what the Commission's Report will recommend, it is timely to examine how to increase equity, diversity and inclusion in one of our great national games.

As our world is changing at pace, it is not surprising that cricket is doing so too. The game most likely began - although no-one can be certain - in the 16th Century, as a pastime in rural Kent. Over the years, it became one of Britain's greatest exports and is now a near global phenomenon.

Cricket was born to become a game for everyone, and that must be our ambition. As a boy I lived in Brixton, during the years of high immigration from the West Indies, and my impromptu games of street and park cricket were - more often than not - with young migrants. It brought us together, when the impulse of the time might have kept us apart.

I still remember those days, and the joy we all gained from our games together, with a warm glow. Much has changed since then. In those days, few girls joined in whereas, in recent years, the growth in women's cricket is truly remarkable, albeit long overdue. But, for girls especially, access to cricket still has a long way to go.

As State school cricket continues to be sparse, and local Clubs struggle financially, many young people find it a challenge to gain any experience of playing at all - especially if they live in our urban conurbations. It is vital that access is widened to admit them to the game.

If we fail to do this, how much talent will we lose and - even more important - how much joy will we deny to those who remain excluded? The joy of cricket, once instilled, is life-long for player or spectator, and making it available to everyone must be made a priority.

I can say, with perfect truth, that my own life has been immeasurably enhanced by cricket - both as a young player and now an avid spectator.

I hope this Report will recommend a path towards opening up cricket to all those currently excluded - children and adults of both sexes, from all backgrounds, and all income groups - so that everyone may be able to experience the same enjoyment - and sheer delight - that, for over 70 years, the game has gifted to me.

THE RT HON SIR JOHN MAJOR KG CH

May 2023



## Foreword by Cindy Butts, Chair of the ICEC

It has been a great privilege and honour to have chaired the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket (ICEC). The role has brought together two of the greatest passions in my life – the sport of cricket itself and the advancement of equity, diversity, and inclusion within society. I have had a deep connection to cricket from the youngest age; raised in a family devoted to the sport over several generations. My Grandfather was an avid recreational player and various family members played professionally at both County and International level in England and the Caribbean. From a personal perspective, however, my own interest was ignited and nurtured by my mother’s love of cricket, a sentiment expressed by her singing the great calypso serenade “Cricket, lovely cricket”<sup>1</sup> as she prepared for a summer’s day in the garden spectating on the television or in the event of a rare pilgrimage to The Oval or Lord’s to form part of the crowd cheering the West Indies to victory during their years of glory.

My parents migrated to London in the 1960s from Guyana and the Caribbean. Growing up in the 1970s and 1980s in the working class areas of West London, I have always been aware of the conflicts at the very heart of cricket’s identity as well as its unique capacity for reconciliation and resolution.

The Commission’s work was instigated as a consequence of the broad reactive introspection generated by the public outcry following the tragic murder of George Floyd. Readers will no doubt recall their own personal response to witnessing such inhumane actions undertaken by the very members of society entrusted with the role of protection. There was a spontaneous extension of this visceral response into collective protests for a renewed scrutiny of society’s institutions to ensure that they represented the highest principles of our beliefs in fairness, equity, meritocratic process and fair competition.

As our work progressed, and closer to home, cricket was faced with its own indication that “something is rotten in the state of cricket” when in November 2021, Azeem Rafiq publicly revealed the shocking levels of racism he experienced during his cricket career whilst giving evidence to the then Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Select Committee. This resulted in significantly increased media and public interest in our work and a response to our Call for Evidence that was so large it had the unfortunate but inevitable consequence that our work took far longer to complete than was expected.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06P0RdZyjT4>

This Report is the culmination of the Commission's work. For many involved in the sport (including the ECB) the revelations and recommendations of this Report will make for uncomfortable reading. It feels all the more uncomfortable given that the sirens of concern were sounding over two decades ago when the 'Clean Bowl Racism' report identified racism as a problem in cricket. At the time, the ECB's response was to say *"We must put the research which has been undertaken into context. There are no great revelations here. We were always aware that some element of racism existed and we have not sat around idly and let it fester."*<sup>2</sup> If there were no great revelations then it is a source of great disappointment that, 24 years on, we make a number of wide-ranging findings that point to the fact that deeply rooted and widespread forms of structural and institutional racism continue to exist across the game. But this is not just about racism; as importantly, our work on gender and class also starkly highlights deeply rooted and widespread forms of structural and institutional sexism and class-based discrimination across the game.

In light of those findings, we make a number of ambitious recommendations to enable an urgent and radical overhaul of the policies, practices, systems and structures that currently exist in cricket, some of which will necessarily require significant investment in time and financial resources in order to bring about much needed change in all of the areas we examined, and in all areas of the game.

The focus of this Report is about whole systems institutional change and not about finding fault with individuals; it is for this reason we have taken a 'game-wide' approach to optimise the opportunity for achieving systemic change. We are not saying that every individual or even every individual institution within cricket is rife with discrimination. On the contrary, throughout our work we encountered many people in the game (players, staff and volunteers alike) who work tirelessly for the genuine betterment of cricket. We also don't believe that the ECB and cricket need to embark on the process of change with a blank sheet of paper. Green shoots are emerging. The recent gains which have been made in elements of the women's game serve as a powerful testament to what can be achieved with a clearly defined vision, supported by institutional will and a significant investment of resources; the challenge is to build significantly on these changes in respect of the women's game and apply them to all the areas we identify throughout our Report. We were encouraged by progress in relation to South Asian cricket as well as a number of other initiatives aimed at improving participation and inclusion.

But there remains a stark reality that cricket is not a 'game for everyone' and it is absolutely essential that the work required to achieve that ambition must begin immediately. The building of a truly equitable sport will not follow passively from the reading of this Report itself; rather, the game will need to apply a steadfast commitment and relentless vigilance to ensure that the policies, practices and systems are reformed and embedded into all aspects of cricket in England and Wales.

Importantly, however, equity will not be achieved solely on the basis of changes to policies and systems. A fundamental change in culture and attitudes is required, along with a recognition of the impact of the game's history and an acceptance of the widespread discrimination and structural barriers which have existed and continue to exist within cricket.

Be in no doubt, what is needed now is leadership. I very much hope that the recommendations we make in this Report will be adopted and driven forward by the ECB and all others in leadership positions, across the full spectrum of cricket, in both the professional and recreational game. It is the leaders who will ultimately effect change, emboldening and empowering others within the game to get behind our recommendations to ensure that cricket can truly represent the best values and principles of our nation and which everyone can be truly proud to call our national summer sport.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sportcal.com/pressreleases/ecb-welcomes-plans-to-improve-racial-equality/>

The list of acknowledgements must, rightly, begin with the testimonies we received from those who have suffered discrimination over the years, which were often overwhelming in their depth and insight. The evidence they provided has given us a powerful sense of responsibility to represent their personal narratives and attempt to crystallise the learning from their experiences, and from the wider body of evidence we have gathered, into the recommendations we have made to improve the sport we love.

The ECB deserves praise for initiating this process, devoting both time and resources as well as courageously opening themselves up to prolonged, rigorous and at times uncomfortable independent scrutiny. A great many organisations would not have been brave enough to relinquish control in the manner in which they have in establishing a truly independent Commission, and I wish to put on record my admiration for them in this regard.

I am also grateful to the County Cricket organisations and a number of other individuals and organisations who gave their time and support to the Commission, enabling us to have far reaching insight into how cricket is working.

I am fortunate to have had the benefit of four incredibly supportive Commissioners with extensive experience (including deep cricket knowledge) without whom this work would not have been possible. We have all, from the very outset, shared one collective and abiding desire: to see cricket emerge as the most equitable and inclusive sport in the country. As Commissioners, their commitment to realise this ambition was unwavering - they provided me with expertise, sage counsel and time, all of which they gave most generously. I am indebted to them.

My final words of thanks must necessarily be reserved for the Commission's Secretariat; they have played an essential role in enabling the completion of this momentous task, and I extend my sincere gratitude to them all for their hard work and support. The quality of advice and support I received from the Commission's Head of Secretariat, Nazia Mirza, deserves particular recognition.

I do not underestimate the challenges that lie ahead but if cricket is to become a game that is truly for everyone, work on the issues we raise in this Report cannot wait. Now is the time for cricket to show its mettle. To those who don't recognise there is a problem, those who think cricket's problems are isolated, those who mistakenly believe focusing on issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion is distracting cricket from cricket, I have one clear message: if cricket is to survive and thrive, and become a game genuinely for all, it has to grip the opportunities I truly believe our recommendations represent.

I remain optimistic that cricket will respond to this challenge with passion, creativity, and commitment.

CINDY BUTTS, CHAIR OF THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION FOR EQUITY IN CRICKET

June 2023



# Executive Summary

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## 1.1 Overview and introduction

- 1.1.1 Cricket has the power to change lives. Loved by millions across the planet, it is a sport of connection: to friends and family, to team, club, community, and to the whole cricketing world. It inspires, thrills, and brings joy to anyone who picks up a bat and ball, be it on the street, the beach, in a back garden, or on the village green. It offers a myriad of opportunities both personally and professionally, from building leadership and teamwork skills to making lifelong friendships and improving health. Careers in coaching, umpiring and administration sit alongside the chance to play professionally in multiple formats at home and abroad. For the lucky and talented few, there is also the chance to represent their country on an international stage. A game **for** everyone that belongs **to** everyone – or at least that is what it should be.
- 1.1.2 In reality, however, racism, sexism, elitism and class-based discrimination have a long history within the culture and institutions of English and Welsh cricket. Alongside the images of tradition and fairness that many love about cricket sits a history of tensions and social conflicts. This is why our Report, somewhat unusually, begins with a chapter that sets out the historical context for cricket in England and Wales. Engaging with this history is critical as it reveals many unspoken assumptions, inherited from the past, that continue to shape the game, explaining why some have had the opportunities to succeed and thrive with others left behind at the margins. Indeed, our evidence shows that elitism alongside deeply rooted and widespread forms of structural and institutional racism, sexism and class-based discrimination **continue** to exist across the game.
- 1.1.3 We would emphasise the fact that this does not mean that we consider that every individual, and every individual institution, involved in the sport discriminates, nor that the discrimination we have identified is necessarily deliberate. Far from it. Many people – players, volunteers, leaders and staff alike – are already deeply committed to improving equity in cricket. What we are saying is that, in our view, there remain collective failures within the sport of cricket in England and Wales to ensure equality of treatment and/or opportunity, which tend to disadvantage certain people based on their race, gender and/or class.
- 1.1.4 In the last two years, confidence in the game, and in those who run it, has been severely undermined following public revelations of racism and wider discrimination. There have also been widespread concerns both within the game, and externally, about how these matters have been handled by those in leadership positions.
- 1.1.5 In November 2020, the ECB announced its intention to establish a Commission “*to assist the ECB Board in assessing the evidence of inequalities and discrimination of all forms within cricket, and the actions needed to tackle these issues.*”<sup>1</sup> The Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket (ICEC) was subsequently established in March 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ecb.co.uk/news/1914696/ecb-commits-to-further-action-to-drive-out-discrimination-and-increase-diversity-across-cricket>

- 1.1.6 The problems we identify are not, sadly, unique to cricket. In many instances they are indicative of equally deeply rooted societal problems and so whilst our headline finding is necessarily blunt, we consider the fact that the ECB proactively initiated this process and opened itself up to independent scrutiny is both positive and brave. Change does not happen without understanding the issues that need to be addressed and so we believe the ECB is worthy of praise for undertaking this exercise. It is also clear that there have been sizeable improvements in the ECB's, and sections of the wider game's, approach, particularly since 2018 when the ECB introduced its independent Board. It is our view that the ECB's new leadership brings with it a renewed drive to achieve meaningful change, and it is deserving of ongoing support from within cricket and from its partners more widely as it continues on what we acknowledge will be a long term journey towards achieving equity in cricket.
- 1.1.7 Discrimination, whether along the lines of gender, class or race, is devastating. Alongside the economic and social cost of missed opportunities to individuals, organisations and wider society, it has also been shown to seriously impact mental and physical health.<sup>2</sup> This must be addressed and those who lead cricket have a responsibility to do everything within their power to create a culture that eliminates discrimination and inequity in the game.
- 1.1.8 Based on preliminary work to identify the most commonly called for actions to improve equity in cricket, we considered that focusing on race, gender and class would give us the best opportunity to effect sustained change in some of the most pressing problem areas for English and Welsh cricket. We hope, however, that our findings will be relevant to, and have beneficial consequences for, other marginalised groups throughout the game. Our Terms of Reference are set out at Appendix 1.
- 1.1.9 Taken in the round, the evidence we received demonstrated that people's experiences within the sport tend to be structured by their socio-demographic and socio-economic profile, undermining the idea that cricket is 'a game for everyone'. Our research also shows that disadvantages linked to gender, race and class can have a cumulative impact, exacerbating any detriment experienced as a result of those individual factors alone. Achieving equity in cricket requires us to think clearly through an intersectional lens about how discrimination can be experienced in order to design effective interventions to combat it.
- 1.1.10 The evidence also drew our attention to the prevalence of an elitist and exclusionary culture within English and Welsh cricket. This culture is, in part, enforced through the dominance of private school networks within cricket's talent pathway, together with sexist, racist and other discriminatory practices and policies that lead to discriminatory outcomes across the game. We heard, for example, extensive, often shocking, evidence of interpersonal racism and sexism, which gave rise to a concern about prevailing social norms within English and Welsh cricket. It is our assessment that the extent, frequency and seriousness of some of the behaviours described to us reveal a culture in which overt discrimination often goes without serious challenge. These behaviours include, but are not limited to: racist, misogynistic, homophobic and ableist comments and actions, and a 'laddish' drinking culture that can sometimes make women vulnerable and at risk of unwanted or unwelcome behaviour, as well as alienating others due to religious and/or cultural beliefs.
- 1.1.11 Chapter 4 on the State of Equity in Cricket provides a powerful statistical context for our findings around the game's culture and for the Report more generally. Our hope is that the Chapter can act as a benchmark for cricket, aiding its leaders in reflecting on how equitable the game is today and what decisions are needed to eliminate discrimination and advance equity. Some of the data will be familiar to those close to the game, other data may be surprising. Many need concerted action in response. One of our recommendations is that the ECB carries out an equivalent assessment of equity in cricket every three years, to properly monitor progress and, ideally, demonstrate improvement.

<sup>2</sup> <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-020-09792-1> & <https://europepmc.org/article/MED/31497985>



- 1.1.12 The Commission of course recognises that different parts of England and Wales will have different challenges in terms of the barriers that exist. Counties are at different stages when it comes to recognising and challenging discrimination in the game. Some have more resources than others, some are making progress, others lag behind. We have adopted a game-wide approach to our work and so have not examined regional differences in detail. We acknowledge, therefore, that our conclusions may not always resonate with the experience in every part of the country. One academic told us that *“you need specific interventions to help specific communities in specific areas.”* We agree, and would urge the ECB and the wider game to consider this as they implement our recommendations.

## 1.2 How does discrimination show itself?

### Racism



All the stories that Azeem Rafiq talks about, that all happened to me. All the abuse, the isolation, the hatred. [Teammates] poured alcohol on me. They threw bacon sandwiches at me. I have lived with all that and never spoke to anyone about it.

*Asian (Pakistani) man, state school, former player*

### A deep-seated issue of racism continues to exist in cricket

- 1.2.1 During our hearings with the ECB, we asked its leadership if they agreed with the conclusion reached by the DCMS Select Committee in January 2022 *“that there is a deep-seated issue of racism in cricket”* and that, more pertinently, *“it is evident to [...] the England and Wales Cricket Board that there is an issue of racism in cricket.”*<sup>3</sup> The responses were mixed. Some Board members acknowledged that there was *“a history of racism in the game”* but that it was not *“deep-seated in that broad sense”* but instead existed in *“pockets”*. Others, however, were clear that *“without doubt the way cricket has been structured and led historically has created the conditions for racism or racist incidents to be perpetuated”* and that it was in fact *“probably”* deep-seated in part.
- 1.2.2 The evidence is unequivocal: racism is a serious issue in cricket. We are clear, as a Commission, that racism in cricket is not confined to ‘pockets’ or ‘a few bad apples’, nor is it limited to individual incidents of misconduct (i.e. interpersonal racism). In our opinion, the cumulative picture of evidence demonstrates that racism, in all its forms, continues to shape the experience of, and opportunities for, many in the game. We hope that our Report enables the ECB, and importantly the wider game, to move to a more realistic view of the extent and nature of racism in English and Welsh cricket.

### A culture where racism is normalised and authorities aren’t always trusted to act

- 1.2.3 The qualitative responses to our lived experiences survey included many examples of overt racism and abuse from club officials, team members and supporters directed, in particular, at Black and South Asian players including derogatory and inappropriate language, racist stereotyping and assumptions being made about them.

<sup>3</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/8470/documents/86256/default/>

- 1.2.4 Whilst 50% of all respondents described experiencing discrimination in the previous five years, the figures were substantially higher for people from ethnically diverse communities: 87% of people with Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage, 82% of people with Indian heritage and 75% of all Black respondents.
- 1.2.5 Despite this high prevalence, three quarters of those who experienced racism (and wider discrimination) did not report it to cricketing authorities. Our evidence suggests that the most common reason for low reporting is the significant trust deficit that exists between victims of discrimination and cricketing authorities: many victims told us that they lack confidence that appropriate action will be taken if they do raise concerns, as well as finding systems inadequate and outcomes unsatisfactory. By contrast, many of those in authority consider the systems they operate to be effective. This gulf in perceptions needs to be addressed as a priority.

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### **A lack of representation, unequal outcomes and structural barriers**

- 1.2.6 In cricket's most senior leadership,<sup>4</sup> South Asian representation is limited to 2.8% despite South Asians making up 26-29% of the game's adult recreational population and 6.9%<sup>5</sup> of the population of England and Wales. In addition, with the exception of a single Black woman on the ECB Board (who is shortly to depart)<sup>6</sup>, Black people are entirely absent from the game's most senior leadership.
- 1.2.7 The ethnicity of male and female players at professional level does not reflect the ethnicity of the adult recreational playing base, nor the wider population of England and Wales. Asian British and Black British players comprised 8.1% of all male professional players in 2021,<sup>7</sup> compared with 30-35% of the game's adult recreational population being from ethnically diverse backgrounds and 10.9% of the population in England and Wales being South Asian or Black.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, there were more male players from White Other backgrounds (55) than Asian British players (21) or Black British players (12) in 2021. A widely quoted statistic is that there has been a decline in Black British male professional players of around 75%.<sup>9</sup> Female cricketers playing at domestic professional level are disproportionately White: in 2021, there were only two Black British, four Mixed/Multiple ethnicity and eight South Asian female players, out of a total of 161.<sup>10</sup>
- 1.2.8 In addition to this quantitative evidence, we identified structures in existence that lead to racial disparities and discrimination in terms of talent selection and progression, such as the lack of cricket in state schools and in our inner cities, the absence of diverse role models, and the use of talent selection criteria that increase the vulnerability of South Asian and Black players to bias. The evidence points to the fact that often those from ethnically diverse communities are not afforded the same opportunities, the same recognition and the same support as their White counterparts.
- 1.2.9 We also saw many examples of stereotyping, exclusion and other forms of racism directed towards South Asian and Black players and officials, with individuals from both groups feeling like they need to be overqualified to succeed.

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<sup>4</sup> In our Chapter 4 on the State of Equity in Cricket, we consider the game's most senior leadership to include the 12 members of the ECB Board, the Chairs of the 41 Members of the ECB, and the CEOs of the 18 First Class Counties and MCC, bringing the total in the most senior leadership group to 72.

<sup>5</sup> Total figure for 'Asian' in the Census 2021 is 9.3%. South Asian figure calculated using raw data from ONS, Census 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Correct as at 31 December 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Based on ICEC historical player research.

<sup>8</sup> See Figure 2 under paragraph 4.2.5.

<sup>9</sup> ACE Programme, 'About Us'. <https://aceprogramme.com/about/>

<sup>10</sup> Based on ICEC historical player research.

## Cricket has failed Black communities



We know we have lost a generation of Black cricketers to our sport. We accept that the ECB could have done more historically to own that challenge and come up with a comprehensive programme sooner.

*The ECB*

- 1.2.10 The decline in Black cricket in England and Wales has been well documented and subject to much public debate for many years. Many have described, including many of the witnesses we spoke to, the closure of Haringey Cricket College in 1997 as a pivotal moment in this decline. We agree, and reflecting on the tremendous success of the College during its lifetime, consider it regrettable that the ECB at the time did not use its power and influence to prevent its closure.
- 1.2.11 This decline is also mirrored in participation where Black adults are not playing cricket in sufficient numbers to even be picked up by surveys that measure participation in cricket: a 2020 report by Sport England found that Black participation was so low as to be statistically irrelevant, apparently lower than in golf and tennis.
- 1.2.12 Whilst there has been some recent and welcome recognition by the ECB that Black communities need targeted interventions, we found it deeply concerning and surprising that we could identify no evidence of direct ECB-led activity to understand, halt or reverse this decline since the ECB's formation in 1997. There is no reference to Black communities in the ECB's Inspiring Generations strategy, despite their central role in English cricket in the recent past. For a 'strategy for cricket' described as placing 'diversity and inclusion' at its core, we view this as a striking omission.

## The ECB has been slow to respond

- 1.2.13 It appears to us that the ECB's efforts to address the challenges of equity, diversity and inclusion in cricket only gained real momentum following the introduction of its independent<sup>11</sup> Board in 2018, nearly 19 years after the 1999 'Clean Bowl Racism' report concluded that racism existed in cricket. Whilst the South Asian Action Plan (SAAP) published in 2018 has begun to address some of the barriers faced by South Asian players, it fails to directly acknowledge that specifically **racism** needs addressing in the recreational and professional game, beyond references to unconscious bias training.
- 1.2.14 It is concerning and regrettable that there appears to be little evidence of **effective** game-wide action to tackle racism and wider discrimination before 2018, despite clear evidence that racism was a serious problem in the game. The persistence of interpersonal and structural racism in cricket is due, we believe, in part to a failure by the ECB to specifically and unambiguously name racism as a concern, at least until the recent crisis (and only then generally in reference to interpersonal and overt forms of racism). As such, racism remains a widespread and serious problem in cricket across England and Wales and something that the ECB and the wider game should address with urgency.

<sup>11</sup> By independent Board, we are referring to the fact that, since 2018, individuals on the Board do not (and cannot) also hold relevant posts in the County cricket network or at MCC.

## Sexism



[I have been] told: A lady cannot be a good umpire. I should go back home. Get off the field. Women's cricket is sh\*t. Women can't make decisions. Women shouldn't even umpire.

*Unattributed to protect confidentiality*

### Women are still seen as an 'add on' to the men's game

- 1.2.15 It has been 278 years since the first recorded women's cricket match, 133 years since the first group of women cricketers toured the UK, and 97 years since the foundation of the Women's Cricket Association,<sup>12</sup> yet women are not even nearly on an equal footing with men within the sport today. Our evidence shows that women continue to be treated as subordinate to men within, and at all levels of, cricket. This is evident both from the lived experience of professional and recreational women cricketers and from the structural barriers that women continue to face.
- 1.2.16 The women's game lacks proper representation amongst the highest level of decision-makers within cricket. Only 12.7% of cricket's most senior leadership are women. All current 18 FCC Chairs are men. All but two of those men - one of whom is shortly to depart<sup>13</sup> - are White.
- 1.2.17 Cricket's decision-making and governance structures overwhelmingly represent the men's game. Even with the welcome recent growth of professional women's cricket, Women's Regional Teams (WRTs) are not members of the ECB and so do not have a voice at the highest levels of the game when important decisions are being made.

### Unequal treatment

- 1.2.18 Regarding pay and investment, women receive an embarrassingly small amount compared to men. We received credible evidence that the average salary for England Women is 20.6%<sup>14</sup> of the average salary for England Men for playing white ball cricket, although the ECB has indicated that they consider this figure to be up to 30%. England Women's match fees are 25% of England Men's for white ball matches and only 15% for Test Matches.<sup>15</sup> The England Women's white ball captain's allowance is 31% of the allowance awarded to the England Men's white ball captain.<sup>16</sup> There is still a significant disparity, although less so, in the domestic game. For example, the average domestic salary for women is just less than half of that for the average domestic men's player. Investment in the talent pathway is significantly greater for boys than for girls: in 2021 the total funding for boys' Academies alone was equivalent to 40% of the total funding for the entire Women's Regional Structure.
- 1.2.19 There are significant levels of inequity in the availability of kit for women and girls and in the number of grounds and facilities for women and girls to use, often meaning greater time and cost spent on travel.
- 1.2.20 There is less media exposure and fewer opportunities to play at the premier grounds: the England Women's team has never played a Test Match at Lord's, a fact that alarmed the Commission. The 'home of cricket' is still a home principally for men.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.lords.org/lords/our-history/evolution-of-women-s-cricket>

<sup>13</sup> Correct as at 31 December 2022.

<sup>14</sup> Based on figures for the 2022/2023 contract year.

<sup>15</sup> As of February 2022.

<sup>16</sup> As of February 2022.

- 1.2.21 There is, in our view, credible evidence that some within the sport hold the view that women should be grateful for the gains that they have recently made. This is not only wrong, it also fails to acknowledge the game's legacy of actively excluding women or to recognise that the progress of women's cricket in recent years represents merely the first small step in making up for those many years of exclusion.

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### A prevalent culture of sexism

- 1.2.22 In terms of behaviours, we heard evidence of a widespread culture of sexism and misogyny, and unacceptable behaviour towards women in both the recreational and professional game. Women and women's teams are frequently demeaned, stereotyped and treated as second-class. This included misogynistic and derogatory comments about women and girls, and everyday sexism. On top of this, some described being ostracised and ridiculed either for not participating in, or for objecting to, sexism directed towards female players and umpires or the women's game more generally. There was evidence of unwanted and uninvited advances from men towards women.

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### The TWGCP is having a positive impact but there is still much to do

- 1.2.23 We recognise that women's cricket has made many positive strides since the launch of Inspiring Generations and its underlying action plan known as the Transforming Women's and Girls' Cricket Action Plan (TWGCP). It is clear that the plan is having a significant impact, including on lived experiences, although there remain serious issues of discrimination, both interpersonal and structural, that must be addressed with urgency.

### Class-based discrimination



**The size of your wallet determines if your children progress or not, which is a clear indication that it's not a sport for everyone but for a privileged few.**

*Parent/guardian, county age group player*

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### An elitist culture prevails, largely to the exclusion of those from lower socio-economic backgrounds

- 1.2.24 Our evidence points to the prevalence of elitism and class-based discrimination in cricket. Much of this is, we believe, structural and institutional in nature, driven partly by the lack of access to cricket in state schools and the way in which the talent pathway is structurally bound up with private schools. This makes it much harder for talented young people to progress if they are **not** at so-called 'cricketing' schools - which are overwhelmingly private schools - and do not have alternative means to access the sport. Private school and 'old boys' networks' and cliques permeate the game to the exclusion of many.
- 1.2.25 The percentage of male England players who were privately educated was 57% in 2012, and was similar at 58% in 2021<sup>17</sup> - significantly higher than the 7% of the general population who are privately educated. Of the 4,156 people involved or recently involved in cricket who responded to the lived experience survey commissioned by the ICEC, 42% attended private school.<sup>18</sup> We are confident that this broadly reflects the overrepresentation throughout the game of those who have been privately educated.

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<sup>17</sup> Based on ICEC historical player research.

<sup>18</sup> Annex 1, Lived Experiences of Discrimination in Cricket.

- 1.2.26 In the talent pathway, the scholarships that are provided to talented state school pupils, whilst generally beneficial to those individuals who receive them, perpetuate the gulf between state and private school provision and reinforce the significantly greater prospects of success of privately educated children. We believe that, for many, cricket in England and Wales does not currently offer a viable state school pathway to elite, professional cricket.

### There is an urgent need to recognise and tackle cricket's class problem

- 1.2.27 According to the evidence we reviewed there appears to have been neither the focus on, nor sufficient will to address, class barriers in cricket. To date, the ECB has not developed a specific, holistic strategy to address inequity based on class, schooling or socio-economic background. Our view as a Commission is that an immediate sea change in attitudes is required: a recognition of the barriers and a systematic, proactive and country-wide change in approach to break them down.
- 1.2.28 Cricket must ensure that, along with their ethnically diverse counterparts, White working class cricketers do not miss out on the opportunity to play and progress. This applies beyond just playing cricket: strategies need to target the diversification of the socio-economic demographic of cricket's leaders, members, coaches and umpires. Moreover, plans that target women, and Black and South Asian communities, need considerations of class at their heart.

## Schools and the talent pathway



**This [private schools' connections to professional cricket] in itself, is alienating a huge proportion of the population from having a viable entry into professional cricket and this applies to the white working classes in addition to those from an ethnically diverse background.**

*Cricket Charities, and Sport and Equality Organisations and Charities*

- 1.2.29 We recognise and commend the fact that the ethnic diversity in both the boys' and girls' talent pathways is growing, although it still lags behind ethnic diversity in the adult recreational game overall and there has been limited growth in the number of young players from Black communities.

### Significant barriers to equity exist on the cricket talent pathway

- 1.2.30 The structure and operation of the talent pathway remains a barrier to equity and inclusion across gender, class and race. As such, it repeats and reinforces wider structural inequalities that exist across cricket in England and Wales. The scarce provision of cricket in state schools, the widespread links between cricket and private schools, the cost and time associated with playing youth cricket, the lack of a systematic, contextual process for talent identification, and the relative absence of diversity amongst coaches on the talent pathway: these are all important factors which present significant barriers to an equitable system. The way that the pathway is structured creates even greater obstacles for girls than boys: for example, the smaller number of County/WRT Academies for girls (8 compared with 18 for boys) mean that girls are much more likely to have to travel further to training and matches (with all the associated costs).
- 1.2.31 Our evidence shows that ethnicity has a significant influence on a child's prospects of entering and progressing through the pathway; that class, schooling and socio-economic background have, arguably, even more of an impact; and that the intersection of ethnicity plus class can make a dramatic difference. Inequity permeates every aspect of the pathway and, whilst we saw evidence of pockets of good practice, much more needs to be done.

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## Private schools dominate the talent pathway

- 1.2.32 Despite having some awareness of the issue before we started our work, the starkness of the class divide and the gulf between state and private school provision in the talent pathway shocked us. For as long as the system relies as heavily as it does on its links to private schools, there will never be meaningful equity in either the talent pathway or English and Welsh cricket more broadly, regardless of any EDI programmes or initiatives. Of the 5,072 private and state secondary schools in England and Wales, private schools make up 28.2% and yet they represent 70.9% of the secondary schools that are connected with the Counties.<sup>19</sup> Research in 2017 into a group of nine private schools known as the Clarendon schools found that *“the alumni of these nine elite schools are 94 times more likely to reach the British elite”* compared with all those who had been to all other schools.<sup>20</sup> County talent pathways are connected to eight out of these nine schools.

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## Costs are prohibitive

- 1.2.33 We believe very strongly that the costs associated with participation in the talent pathway are one of the most significant barriers to equity in cricket. It will never be ‘a game for all’ at County level and above when large parts of society simply cannot afford to get their foot on the ladder and progress, no matter how talented they may be. If an appeal to equity and fairness isn’t enough on its own, we are clear that cricket in England and Wales is losing talented - potentially great - players simply because of the financial barriers the game puts in their way.

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## Talent ID and selection processes reinforce inequities

- 1.2.34 In terms of talent identification (and whilst not making allegations against any particular individuals) there is clear evidence that coaches’ conflicts of interest and biases (conscious or otherwise) are operating to the detriment of those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and Black and South Asian players. This compounds the structural inequalities produced by the private school advantage. The level of ‘cultural competency’ and understanding of bias, so important for ensuring equitable selection, varies between the Counties. The impact is exacerbated by a talent identification framework that in our view does not adequately promote the idea of selectors taking a holistic and contextual view of a player’s potential and merit, thus mitigating against the biases that tend to predominate on the pathway.

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<sup>19</sup> Detailed in Chapter 4, State of Equity in Cricket. Although private schools make up approximately 28% of the secondary schools in England and Wales, as noted elsewhere in this Report (e.g. paragraph 4.4.16), only about 7% of all pupils attend private schools, albeit that percentage increases for those aged 17 and 18. One possible reason for this difference could be that the average number of students attending each private secondary school is lower than the equivalent number attending state secondary schools.

<sup>20</sup> Flemmen Friedman, ‘The Decline and Persistence of the Old Boy: Private Schools and Elite Recruitment 1897 to 2016’, *American Sociological Review* (2017), p. 16. <https://www.pepf.co.uk/research/the-decline-and-persistence-of-the-old-boy/>

## 1.3 How did this happen?

### EDI strategy

- 1.3.1 As we describe in Chapter 6, Approach to EDI in Cricket, the ECB’s approach to EDI appears, to date, to have been heavily influenced by its commercial considerations, including maximising the growth of the game and its revenues, and emphasising the protection of its and the game’s reputation. This has inevitably resulted in a strategy that has delivered mixed results, at times without sufficient focus on what is right for fairness and equity. Whilst there have been important and notable successes that should be commended, in particular the development of the women’s game and emerging evidence of progress in relation to South Asian communities on the talent pathway, there have also been serious failures for which there must be both acknowledgement and remedy. These failures include, in particular, the failure to adequately support cricket in Black communities and lack of any specific steps to address the significant underrepresentation in professional cricket of those who attend state schools.

### Failure to name racism and other forms of discrimination

- 1.3.2 It is notable that in its various EDI strategy documents and in the language that it uses, the ECB often fails to name structural and/or institutional forms of racism, sexism or class-based discrimination as problems in the sport, despite the overwhelming evidence that they exist. There has been a failure, for example, to expressly recognise that a person’s ethnicity (either on its own or in conjunction with their socio-economic status and/or gender) is likely to limit their opportunities to enjoy and progress within the sport. This, we believe, prevents meaningful action being taken to address these structural and institutional barriers.
- 1.3.3 Our evidence shows that discrimination is often only seen through the lens of deliberate interpersonal abuse. There appears to be a failure to recognise, or at least clearly acknowledge, that it can also be structural and/or institutional in nature and can manifest itself in systems and decision-making processes that disproportionately disadvantage one group over another. There is a vital need for the ECB Board (and, indeed, cricket as a whole) to build its competency on how racism, sexism and class-based discrimination intersect, operate within institutions and social structures (such as our school system), and in so doing compound disadvantages.

### Cricket needs to have a clear set of values

- 1.3.4 At the core of the ECB’s ‘Inspiring Generations’ strategy is the ambition to make cricket ‘a game for everyone’. The ECB described the strategy to us as “*timeless*”. Whether or not this is the case, it is, at present, misaligned with large parts of the sport’s culture, which, as we have concluded, does not promote cricket as a game for everyone. In our view, for culture and strategy to become better aligned, cricket in general, and the ECB in particular, must articulate far more clearly the values that it believes will enable Inspiring Generations to be delivered.



## Governance and leadership

### Lack of diversity in leadership

- 1.3.5 Despite some progress recently in diversifying the Boards of the ECB, FCCs and County Cricket Boards (CCBs), the way in which cricket has developed over time in England (in particular) has created structures that mean power is concentrated in the hands of, mainly, White, middle class men (largely captured by what we have referred to in the Report as Type K).<sup>21</sup>
- 1.3.6 A clear gulf exists between the perceptions of Type K and other respondents on almost every measure in our lived experiences survey. Type K mostly believed cricket to be an inclusive sport in which everyone has the same sense of belonging and opportunities to be themselves regardless of their backgrounds, yet that positive outlook was not shared by many women and people from ethnically diverse communities and/or lower socio-economic backgrounds.<sup>22</sup> The extent of the disconnect between the views of Type K and marginalised groups in cricket is a theme that runs throughout our Report.

### Delivery of EDI should be formalised in the ECB's constitution

- 1.3.7 The ECB's purpose, role and responsibilities are set out in their Articles of Association.<sup>23</sup> They include leading, administering and regulating the game, encouraging participation, improving playing standards, and marketing, promoting and developing the sport. The ECB meets these responsibilities through developing a strategic game-wide plan, implementing a governance framework, generating income, organising competitions and administering officials alongside a wide range of other activities. As the sport's national governing body, the ECB's role is key in leading the game's progress on EDI through guidance, regulation, enforcement and, of course, by example. Critically, at present, the ECB's purpose, as set out in its Articles of Association, does not include any specific obligation to promote and deliver EDI in the game. We believe it should.

### The importance of diversity in the membership model

- 1.3.8 Most of the FCCs operate by way of a membership model. Many are owned by and are accountable to their members. Throughout the course of our work we have seen reports of members exercising their rights and powers in various ways including having the opportunity to accept or reject key decisions about how the game is run.
- 1.3.9 We recognise there are some important benefits to this model and that members make a substantial contribution to the game. However, it also results in a range of implications for the ability of cricketing organisations to comply with requirements in the Sport England Governance Code and for EDI. Whilst we agree that it is right and proper that there is a line of accountability to members, there is also, in our view, a credible risk that the leadership of cricketing organisations can become beholden to small but powerful cliques within the memberships that are resistant to the changes needed both for good governance and in relation to EDI.

<sup>21</sup> To measure intersectional advantage and discrimination, the research company that conducted our online lived experiences survey created a number of 'personas' or 'types' of which Type K was intended to reflect, broadly speaking, the experience of White, middle class men. A full definition is set out at Annex 1, Lived Experiences of Discrimination in Cricket, in section 1.2.2.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Available at <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/03251364/filing-history>

- 1.3.10 These issues are further compounded by the lack of diversity within County membership demographics, which our evidence suggests are often not representative of their local communities, nor of the recreational playing population, remaining dominated by older, White and often (but not exclusively) middle class men. We want to be clear that we are not saying members should not have influence, rights and powers. That would be undemocratic and risk the sport's legitimacy amongst the grassroots. However, it is also our view that memberships that do not represent the diversity of the game also lack legitimacy.
- 1.3.11 For all of these reasons, diversifying memberships is an essential component of ensuring progress towards a more equitable and inclusive game and the ECB, Counties and MCC should be taking all possible steps to make this happen.

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### Cricket's systems for regulating EDI need significant improvement

- 1.3.12 We recognise that the ECB has been taking action to improve the game's systems for regulating EDI over time, particularly since 2018 when the ECB set up its own Legal and Integrity Team and its Regulatory Committee, and with the introduction of collective minimum standards under the County Partnership Agreement in 2020.<sup>24</sup> We recognise that these changes have not had sufficient time to bed in and that there is evidence of improving performance. We also note the outcome of the recent ECB investigation and subsequent disciplinary process regarding Azeem Rafiq's allegations against Yorkshire County Cricket Club and several individuals, which resulted in one or more charges being proved against seven of the eight participants charged. Notwithstanding this, it is our view that failures of the regulatory processes have contributed significantly to the crisis that the game is currently facing. The current systems are not yet working as well as they need to: we consider them to lack clarity and, especially in the formal regulatory system, sufficient levels of independence. The phrase 'marking your own homework' was often used in evidence to us.
- 1.3.13 It is our assessment that there needs to be much greater independence of the regulatory function in cricket than exists or even than is currently envisaged by the governance review recently commissioned by the ECB, which recommended that "*the role of, and perceived and real level of independence of the Regulatory function*" should be enhanced.<sup>25</sup> To provide greater clarity, regulations should be focused solely on matters of discipline and integrity, including anti-discrimination rules. All rules, codes, standards, guidance etc covering issues not related to discipline and integrity should be part of the game's non-regulatory collective minimum standards. The EDI-related regulations and standards need to be stronger and more robust than they are at present.
- 1.3.14 In our opinion, the ECB's dual roles of promoter and regulator have the potential to give rise to conflicts of interest that are irreconcilable under the game's current and proposed regulatory and compliance structure. 'Commercial' considerations, understandably, require the ECB to be focused on, amongst other things, growing the sport's revenue and protecting its reputation. Those considerations may at times, however, be (or appear to be) in conflict with the need to take concerted and effective regulatory action.
- 1.3.15 We heard evidence of disquiet in the game that this dual responsibility could lead to poor conduct not being tackled appropriately if perpetrators are high performing and/or considered too valuable to lose. This is a particular risk in relation to discrimination, where the potential commercial and/or reputational damage may be significant if poor behaviour comes to light. As a result, the temptation to look the other way can be hard to ignore. In saying that, we acknowledge that regulatory action has been taken by the ECB against some high profile individuals in recent years, including England players. Nonetheless, our evidence is that there is still concern across the game about the ECB's dual role of promoter and regulator, which needs to be addressed.

<sup>24</sup> When we talk about 'regulating' EDI in cricket, we are referring to all the ways in which EDI-related rules and standards are set and enforced, including through the formal regulatory process and non-regulatory collective minimum standards.

<sup>25</sup> A review by Portas Consulting (a specialist sports management consultancy) of governance and regulation in cricket to identify opportunities to strengthen the structures and processes across the game.

- 1.3.16 The solution is to ensure that the body responsible for the investigation of regulatory breaches, and the decision about whether to bring charges for them, is separated from the organisation responsible for the promotion of the game - and is clearly understood to be separate. Accordingly, we believe that there should be a newly-established, independent regulatory body.

## Complaints

### **An effective complaints process is part of advancing EDI**

- 1.3.17 A clear and effective process for addressing and resolving complaints is essential for any organisation. The approach taken can reveal an organisation's culture and values: whether there is a genuine commitment to fairness and to learning from mistakes, or simply a desire to protect reputations and maintain the status quo. This is doubly true when it comes to promoting fairness and equity. Effective handling of discrimination allegations is a key component of a genuinely inclusive culture, confronting behaviours that enable and reproduce discrimination.

### **An ineffective complaints process is detrimental to EDI**

- 1.3.18 We found that the general attitude towards complaints often appears to be overly defensive, regarding them as a problem to be solved as quickly and quietly as possible. There is a tendency to 'go legal' as soon as a complaint is received, which often entrenches positions and prevents any opportunity to explore early resolution. A low number of complaints is seen by some as a good thing, without any appreciation that people might have reason to complain but choose not to. We heard a great deal of evidence that most instances of discrimination go unreported for a variety of reasons, including confusion about the process, a perception that nothing will be done and, most concerningly, a fear of victimisation.
- 1.3.19 Many within cricket do not yet seem to appreciate that complaints can be a source of valuable feedback and insight. Proper collation of information, both about the complaints themselves and the underlying issues they might reveal, should be regarded as essential for the game to learn lessons, share best practice and help everyone in cricket to improve.
- 1.3.20 Our evidence indicates that the systems that cricket has in place for handling allegations of discrimination are unfit for purpose and require urgent reform. Many of those seeking to raise concerns find the complaints process difficult to navigate, poorly explained and stressful, as do many of those who are the subjects of complaints.
- 1.3.21 The process of handling complaints needs to be further professionalised, not only in the recreational game but also in professional cricket. Some of the FCCs we spoke to were eager for greater help and support from the ECB, particularly with responding to discrimination complaints.
- 1.3.22 There needs to be a greater focus on achieving appropriate outcomes. The ECB and the wider game seem to regard formal complaints as the only (or at least the principal) route to follow. Insufficient attention is paid to other means of raising concerns that could lead to quick, proportionate and informal resolution (where appropriate). We are concerned that categorising all discrimination allegations as 'whistleblowing' may be unhelpful and counter-productive, often leading to only the most serious complaints being raised. Sometimes, an individual who has experienced more minor forms of discrimination just wants it to stop, with the person responsible acknowledging that their behaviour is wrong. A genuine apology and willingness to change can go a long way.
- 1.3.23 There is not enough focus on individuals as potential victims who need support. Similarly, there does not appear to be enough support provided for others involved in complaints, primarily the subject of the complaint but also witnesses and those who are responsible for handling and investigating complaints, which can often be stressful and emotionally draining.

- 1.3.24 Complaints handling and resolution should be overseen by senior leaders in an organisation, not just left to those responsible for managing and investigating complaints. Senior leaders, on and off the pitch, should be under a duty to 'call out' discrimination whenever they see it, as well as leading by example through maintaining their own high standards of personal conduct.

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### Cricket Discipline Commission resources and support are inadequate

- 1.3.25 As well as the regulatory reforms we mentioned in the previous section, the Cricket Discipline Commission (CDC) needs to be given the resources and support to enable it to function as an effective independent tribunal, with specialist expertise in discrimination cases, diversity among its Panel Members and its own website providing the means to share lessons learned from its cases directly with the game and through which it can publish all of its decisions in full (except in the most limited of circumstances).
- 1.3.26 The ECB and the wider game should adopt our principles of good practice in handling discrimination complaints, set out in Chapter 8, Complaints.

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## 1.4 Impact

### Cricket is not 'a game for everyone'

- 1.4.1 Having outlined our findings, our inevitable conclusion is that, for many, cricket remains elitist and exclusionary. Some will thrive in an environment in which they possess the 'right' characteristics, whereas those who do not are often faced with barriers that they cannot overcome, denied opportunities to progress or, worse, are emotionally or mentally harmed by their time in the game.
- 1.4.2 The trust deficit in cricket is also significant. We heard repeatedly, particularly from those from marginalised and excluded groups, about a lack of trust: in cricket's ability to regulate itself on EDI matters; in selection processes for entry into and progress within the talent pathway, which are seen as being opaque and unfair; and in the way that cricketing organisations handle complaints of discrimination.
- 1.4.3 Our view is, therefore, clear: unless the culture and structures of cricket are transformed, the sport will fail to attract and retain the best cricketers from the widest possible pool of talent. Perhaps more importantly, many people from different demographics, however talented they are, will continue to feel that cricket is just not a game for them.

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## 1.5 Addressing the issues

- 1.5.1 Taking all of our findings into account, what would, and should, **equity in English and Welsh cricket** look like?
- 1.5.2 'Equity' means the intentional and continuous practice of changing policies, practices, systems and structures to reduce (and ultimately eliminate) inequalities and injustices faced by the people or groups we have identified in this Report who have been disproportionately marginalised and discriminated against within the sport due to their background or identity. To achieve equity, cricket must broaden its appeal, remove barriers faced by marginalised groups and become more representative of society at all levels of the game, on and off the field. The recommendations we make in this Report aim to achieve exactly that. Making cricket more equitable is not only the right thing to do, it should significantly widen the pool of talent available to cricket. It is an opportunity to blaze a trail for other sports, setting the standard for a truly equitable, diverse and inclusive sport in this country and around the world.

## Urgent and radical action is required

- 1.5.3 It should, therefore, come as no surprise that we are recommending an urgent and radical overhaul of the policies, practices, systems and structures that currently exist in cricket, with significant investment towards advancing EDI in all areas of the game.
- 1.5.4 Importantly, however, equity isn't going to be achieved with changes to policies and systems alone. A fundamental change in attitudes is required, along with an acceptance of the game's history and the widespread barriers that exist within it. This must lead to a systematic, proactive and game-wide change in the approach to breaking down those barriers. We hope that readers will accept the invitation we extend in the Introduction to our Report to keep an open mind and accept the reality that thousands of people who participated in this review have **actually experienced** discrimination – as much as it may be uncomfortable to read about it.
- 1.5.5 History has played a significant part in the attitudes that have shaped the discriminatory behaviours and structures that we have identified. Whilst it is, of course, important to look forward, the Commission is in no doubt that it is only by 'staying with' the game's history, and truly understanding and acknowledging people's experiences, alongside implementing and embracing the structural changes that need to be made, that we can be confident that history won't repeat itself.
- 1.5.6 Our recommendations are set out in relevant places, and with the relevant background and evidence provided, throughout the Report and are brought together in Chapter 10, Recommendations. We summarise below the key points that the Commission intends to address with those recommendations. They are bold and stretching. They will require significant investment and we recognise that this will require prioritisation on the part of the ECB. Our Report serves as a road map to fundamental and permanent change and so we acknowledge that, whilst an urgent and radical overhaul is required, some recommendations may only be capable of implementation over the longer term.

## Apology

- 1.5.7 **As an essential first step, our first recommendation is that the ECB makes an unqualified public apology for its own failings and those of the game it governs. The apology should acknowledge that racism, sexism, elitism and class-based discrimination have existed, and still exist, in the game, and recognise the impact on victims of discrimination. It should include, in particular, a direct apology for the ECB's and the wider game's historic failures in relation to women's and girls' cricket and its failure to adequately support Black cricket in England and Wales.**
- 1.5.8 While some may say that words don't count for much, we believe that a full, frank and public recognition of discrimination in cricket, past and present, can help to rebuild trust and signal a clear future direction.

## Purpose and Values

- 1.5.9 An apology is only a starting point for a considered and well-articulated approach to EDI, one where EDI actions aren't words on a page but become integral to everything that cricket does. It must become a core purpose of the ECB as the governing body to promote and deliver EDI in the game. We recommend that this can be further enabled by the ECB, in conjunction with its stakeholders, developing a set of game-wide values that go beyond the 'Spirit of Cricket' and are intended to guide anyone participating in cricket, on or off the field, in everything that they do.
- 1.5.10 By including an obligation to promote and deliver EDI as an integral part of the ECB's purpose, and in developing a clear set of values and behaviours to underpin how cricket is intended to operate, the ECB should be able to create a behavioural framework to support its strategic aims, centring both EDI and the culture required for delivering it. This should be further demonstrated in decision-making, for example, with the use of equality impact assessments or clear evidence that EDI has been contemplated in all strategic decision-making by the ECB and all cricketing organisations.

## EDI strategy

- 1.5.11 Having a purpose-led framework should then help inform the creation of an overarching EDI strategy, as part of which the ECB commits to being an anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-elitist/classist organisation and encourage all other cricketing organisations to do the same. The strategy urgently needs to focus on reversing the decline of cricket in Black communities and the prevalence of class barriers in the game, and ensuring high levels of EDI competency across cricket.

## Diversity in cricket

- 1.5.12 As we have described, there is a significant and widespread disconnect between the Type K perception of EDI challenges in the game, and the perceptions of women, ethnically diverse communities and, to an extent, White, state educated men. Breaking this disconnect is essential and needs to be achieved by increasing diversity at all levels within the game across race, gender and class: not only from a governance perspective by addressing the ECB's and Counties' Board representation, but also by diversifying Counties' memberships, as well as increasing diversity among coaches and other members of staff across the sport.
- 1.5.13 We believe the appointment of an ECB Executive-level Chief EDI Officer, with a seat on the Board and appropriate resources to enable a singular focus on EDI, is required to support the changes we are proposing.

## Women's game

- 1.5.14 We are clear: there should be equal representation within the governance structure for the women's game.
- 1.5.15 In addition, there needs to be a fundamental overhaul of the women's pay structure in order to achieve parity with the men's game. This must be combined with an increase, at pace, in the levels of investment in the core infrastructure and operations of the women's and girls' game, reflecting the outcome of gender-based budgeting. We have set out in the Report how we believe this should be achieved.

## Governance generally

- 1.5.16 We acknowledge that the ECB has been taking action to improve the game's regulatory and governance systems, particularly since 2018 when it set up its own Legal and Integrity team and its Regulatory Committee to advise on regulatory matters. This was followed in 2020 by the launch of the non-regulatory County Partnership Agreement (CPA) Standards and the County Governance Framework. We recognise that these initiatives have not had sufficient time to fully bed in and that there is emerging evidence of improving performance. However, given the nature and scale of the issues we identified, across all levels of the game, we have concluded that greater independence is the only way for the game to move forward from, and out of, the current crisis. We have, therefore, made a series of recommendations regarding the establishment of a single set of regulations, focused on issues of discipline and integrity, and crucially a greater separation of functions, with the establishment of a new independent regulatory body responsible for investigating and bringing charges for alleged regulatory breaches, including the power to investigate and bring charges relating to complaints about the ECB itself.
- 1.5.17 To help bring about the changes we recommend and improve accountability, the CPA Standards, which structure the EDI obligations of Counties, will need to be updated and we make recommendations as to what should be included. The available sanctions for non-compliance with those standards should be widened and strengthened, and the game should report publicly on its performance against them. Incentives should also be included for those that perform well.
- 1.5.18 There is clear evidence that being allocated the right to host high profile matches, or having that right withdrawn, is a powerful tool to encourage compliance with EDI. The current process for match allocation (via a tender process against six criteria) expires in 2024 and we have not identified any formal process for deciding to suspend matches. We have recommended that the ECB revises its processes and criteria for allocating, suspending, cancelling and reinstating high profile matches to place greater emphasis on EDI.

## Complaints

- 1.5.19 With respect to complaints handling, the game needs to ensure there are high standards that are clearly understood, an open and supportive environment in which individuals feel that concerns can be raised without fear of being victimised, a willingness to learn and improve, and alternative means of resolving issues without requiring individuals to make a formal complaint (where appropriate). Where formal complaints are made, there needs to be proper enforcement, accountability, monitoring and the dissemination of lessons learned to achieve change.
- 1.5.20 We have made a series of recommendations to address these issues including revisions to the game's regulations to ensure they are capable of adequately addressing complaints, the provision of training and specialist support to all cricketing organisations to properly equip them to deal with complaints, and the introduction of mechanisms to enable the informal resolution of complaints in appropriate circumstances.
- 1.5.21 We have also recommended changes to properly resource the CDC, to strengthen the sanctions available to it, and to ensure that everyone working in the professional game is subject to the jurisdiction of the CDC, including those working at the ECB.
- 1.5.22 Anyone who is accused of discrimination should be presumed to be innocent until proven guilty, which should be the bedrock of any complaints system. It is, therefore, essential that organisations provide appropriate support to both complainants and those who are the subject of complaints, particularly in light of research highlighting the impact on individuals of being accused of discrimination, including negative effects on their health and wellbeing.

## Schools and the talent pathway

- 1.5.23 A radical change in approach, underpinned by proper investment in routes into and through the talent pathway for the vast majority of our population that only attends state school, is required if the system is to become genuinely fair and equitable. We have made a number of recommendations with regard to schools and the talent pathway aimed at breaking down the significant barriers we identified. They include the implementation of a State Schools Action Plan, more robust guidelines around talent identification and selection, and recommendations to the Government to assist in the process of 'levelling the playing field'.
- 1.5.24 We strongly believe that participation in the talent pathway should be made entirely free of direct costs, so that as of the 2024-25 pathway no player trialling for or participating in the talent pathway needs to pay to participate.
- 1.5.25 We believe that selection for representative, *inter*-County cricket should begin at the Under 14 level and not before. This recommendation will mean that the widely documented challenges associated with talent ID in younger children are removed for the first three years of a typical pathway programme. Placing less emphasis on selection and deselection from Under 10 age groups onwards mitigates the very significant structural advantages that private school children have over their state school counterparts. Coaches, children and parents will be relieved of the pressures and liabilities associated with the current system. Importantly, indirect costs such as travel and parental time will be further reduced, enabling more children to play a high standard of cricket locally, lowering the barriers to participation.

## 1.6 Good practice

### There are some good practices, and progress is being made

- 1.6.1 We have spent a lot of time in our Report focusing on the problems that exist and we recognise that many people who devote a significant amount of time to making the game better may feel demoralised or disheartened reading our Report. As we have already outlined, we do not consider that every individual, and every individual institution, discriminates, or that the discrimination that we have identified is necessarily deliberate. We also readily acknowledge the areas of good practice and signs of improvement that we have seen, with the pace of change increasing during the course of our work. There have been sizeable improvements in the ECB's approach to EDI, particularly since 2018. Inspiring Generations and its underlying plans, including the SAAP and the TWGCP, deserve real credit, and have had a positive impact across the game.
- 1.6.2 As we have mentioned already, the ECB has been taking action to improve the game's regulatory and governance systems, particularly since 2018 when it set up its own Legal and Integrity Team and its Regulatory Committee.
- 1.6.3 Whilst neither are the ECB's initiatives, the ACE Programme, designed, at least in its original formulation, to address the lack of Black representation in cricket, and the South Asian Cricket Academy, are both producing impressive results. The hubs run by the MCC Foundation have also received widespread praise, providing a welcome focus on developing talented state school cricketers.
- 1.6.4 There are some wonderful grassroots initiatives that we refer to in section 7 of Chapter 9 on Schools and the Talent Pathway run by a number of different organisations, including, in many cases, the ECB. We have seen encouraging signs in some Counties of an improved understanding of the challenges and that efforts are being made to improve access to the talent pathway, in particular. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list and there is more evidence of good practice throughout the Report and in the reports we commissioned at Annex 1 and Annex 2.

### Recommendation 1

We recommend that the ECB makes an unqualified public apology for its own failings and those of the game it governs. The apology should acknowledge that racism, sexism, elitism and class-based discrimination have existed, and still exist, in the game, and recognise the impact on victims of discrimination. It should include, in particular, a direct apology for the ECB's and the wider game's historic failures in relation to women's and girls' cricket and its failure to adequately support Black cricket in England and Wales.



**ICEC**

Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket