



# Tackling racism at the grassroots

In support of  
Black Lives Matter  
October 2020

SPORTED

# Context

Discrimination and unequal access to opportunities faced by Black people in the UK are also prevalent in the sports sector:

**20%**

of elite British sportswomen say they have experienced racism

– BBC, 2020

**40%**

of Black, Asian and minority ethnic participants said their experiences of local sport or leisure clubs had been negative, compared to just 14% of white British

– Sporting Equals, 2018

**Only 3%**

of board members of National Governing Bodies are Black

– Sporting Equals, 2018

**Only 58%**

of Black adults meet guidelines of 150 minutes of activity a week (compared to 63% of all adults)

– Sport England, 2019

We know our members serve geographical areas where a high proportion of people identify as Black.

Opinions, information and feelings shared in this report represent the views of our network, and we are very thankful that they shared so openly with us.



# Research Overview

## Research aims:

**To understand, directly from our network, experiences of racism within the community sport sector.**

This was so that we could identify key themes, advocate on their behalf, identify potential solutions and establish support going forward.

## Methodology:

**Sported enlisted voluntary support from Sported volunteers, and conducted:**

- 3 x 1.5 hour online focus groups
- 6 x follow-up conversations by phone with participants who couldn't attend

Full acknowledgement of participating groups can be found on the final page.

**Activities represented:** Football, boxing, multisports, outdoor activities, cricket, basketball, rugby league, roller sports

**Locations represented:** Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, London, North West, Yorkshire and Humber, East Midlands, West Midlands

**Types of organisation represented:** Constituted club, charity, CIC, CIO, Social enterprise company, voluntary organisation, individuals running a community organisation

**Ethnicities of group leaders:** Black (70%), Asian (25%), White (5%)

## Key themes:

**Key themes that were drawn out through this research are:**

- Systemic racism
- Current approaches to tackling racism
- The BLM Agenda
- Representation in sport
- Funding

# Systemic racism

## Challenges

Large groups of Black people are seen as a threat

Young Black people are learning they should pretend to be something they are not

Experience prejudice – stigma, about the area they come from. People assume a Black person is uneducated

White privilege, unconscious bias

Bias against Black people in organisations of authority, e.g. police, government, politicians

## Needs

Don't need training, or leadership programmes (plenty of leadership experience)

Increase understanding of how your experience relates to jobs/ opportunities / institution

Institutions to recognise institutional racism

Top down, not bottom up solutions – in this case

## Solutions

Establish appropriate network to challenge systemic racism and champion anti racism

Be action driven

Through bringing multiple stakeholders together, break down barriers and challenges misconceptions

Create Black empowerment programmes (or white 'disempowerment' programmes)

Investment in youth clubs (and other areas where cuts have disproportionately affected certain people)



# Quotes

“It’s not until they invite me into the conversation that they realise the valid contributions we are making. We **shouldn’t have to work so hard to prove ourselves** before we even get invited to the discussion.”

“If we were **all white**, our journey would have been much easier.”

“As a Black boxing coach, you get **patronized** quite a lot.”

“If you’re a black leader you’re **questioned** twice as much. It goes like this... ‘yeah but who’s the manager?’ ‘I am’ ‘Oh...’”

“If you’re Black and challenging, you’re not going to get an **opportunity**.”

“When you say you’re a club from Bradford, there’s a certain **stigma** around that.”

“We’re **not trusted with money**.”

“That fear is based on **the way I’ve been treated**, indirectly throughout my lifetime.”

“It’s not a unique thing, it’s a **universal experience**.”

# Current approach to tackling racism

## Challenges

People and organisations use words like 'diversity' but don't really understand what it means

London centric approach to diversity – outside of London is quite different

People feel labelled

Diversity and equality positions usually filled by white women

More money in other areas of equality – people feel more comfortable talking about gender than race

## Needs

More than cynical gestures

Organisations have been tackling racism for years, but still feel like they have to prove themselves

Stakeholders to develop a deeper more authentic understanding of cultural differences and how they might lead to specific barriers access services/resources

Address and tackle racist incidents properly

## Solutions

Continue discussion around terminology with appropriate stakeholders, consider how BAME, NEET etc. can feel like a label

Link to Race Equality specialists to inform advice and guidance

Teach more diverse history in schools



# Quotes

“Their review of diversity – **it was wholly London centric**. Our experience in the north is quite different.”

“There’s a lot of **corruption** behind the scenes. We don’t want to have to kowtow to those people, but there are BME organisations who will do that because it will keep them in existence.”

“There was a racist incident a while back. The referee who was involved, he’s still involved. **Nothing’s changed** in 10 years.”

“People in these positions, they **don’t know what diversity is all about**.”

“When they do these reviews, it’ll be interesting to see **who they contact**.”

“It’s far easier to feel the empathy with people fighting for other causes, **everything other than race**.”



# BLM agenda

## Challenges

Other people jump on our agenda, they say 'what about x?' (e.g. gender)

Community Sport Organisations are frustrated with the constant request for information, but with no perceived outcomes and not sure of outcomes that would benefit the police, government, politicians

Great to see commitment, but some are just jumping on the bandwagon

## Needs

Sports sector to acknowledge commitment of organisations to anti-racism in the past

Safe spaces (like the Sported focus group) to discuss ideas

## Solutions

Sported to support members to get their feet in the right doors

Facilitate connections with other organisations working towards same agenda

Support to formalise any working groups etc.

Ensure consultations have clear outcomes



# Quotes

"The experiences I had growing up, I don't want that for **the next generation.**"

"We recommend Sported gets involved in the **review of the Sports Councils**, and make sure something actually changes."

"I'll talk about solutions but **pay me** a proportion of your salary and then we can talk solutions."

"It's not a subject I can talk about in a rational or concise way. **It hurts.**"

"Can Sported help? Well, who are Sported accountable to?"

"I was quite cynical about this, but as long as what comes out of this - **we own.**"

"We don't go into women's forums and say 'well what about Black people?' but for some reason everybody think's it's fine to **jump onto our agenda** and say well what about us?"



# Representation in sport

## Challenges

Not enough representation on NGBs, Sports Councils, or management/ director positions of sports clubs

Disconnect between participants & overall leadership

Many Black leaders of groups set up the organisation & created the opportunity for themselves – not by progressing through existing channels

## Needs

CEOs, leaders of NGBs, Sports Councils and sports clubs to commit and to be held to account

All NGBs need to recognise and reflect on the demographics of people who play their sport. Identify true minorities, work to be inclusive and increase diversity

## Solutions

When discussing and challenging representation, communicate with named individuals in senior positions – means they can't hide within an organisation

Send open letter of this nature to Sports Councils and NGBs (from group of Community Sports Organisations)

Identify leaders within sport from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities (sports people, journalists, sports managers, board members, etc.) Provide platforms/spotlights to elevate their voice as role models. Additionally, provide channels for community groups to connect with these individuals



Representation  
in sport

## Quotes

"I'd love to see a list of the heads of the NGBs. And we **send an open letter** to them all."

You look at the NGB's, there's **not a Black man in there.**"

"People like us should be in there **making the strategies**"

"I want to hear from CEOs – they need to be **held to account**. Not this officer who's delegated with this issue. They need to be named. It's happened on their watch – they need to accept responsibility."

"whatever we feed in, the strategy will still be played out **through a white lens.**"

"I want to see **more Black faces in positions of power**, who are there to influence and are there for the long-term."

"I even ask that question of Sported. How **representative is Sported?**"

"All the judges, all the referees, **they're all white.**"

"Football is the richest sport on the planet. Yet the government and the management is **all white.**"

"I want to be involved in the decision-making, the governance of football. But I am **not the right shade.**"

# Funding

## Challenges

Who gets funding doesn't seem to match up with who's doing good work

Diversity funding streams not designed by diverse group of people – got to write a funding bid to overcome racism, but through a white lens – funding goes to white-led clubs

Short-term funding, small pots don't create change

See ideas they've put in funding applications, copied and replicated elsewhere

'Working with Black, Asian and minority ethnic participants' too broad as a criteria

## Needs

Empowerment of Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities into higher positions at funding organisations

Shift from short-term to longer-term funding to cover core costs – shouldn't need to still prove that it works

Greater distinction between funding for black-led clubs & those working with black YPs

Groups to have more confidence of their worth & not change to please a funder – sometimes most powerful thing can be to say NO!

## Solutions

Review how funding streams are written, ensure they are written by and appropriate to the audience they are aimed at

Transparency over who is on assessment panel

Transparency over criteria – if it's ring-fenced, really make it ring-fenced & be specific

Copyright applications so others don't copy ideas



Funding

# Quotes

“Do Black people put together funding strategies? No. It’s put together through a **white lens**, so we have to adjust what we do so it fits.”

“I don’t want another grant application form to fill out. You know, 11 years later, 55,000 hours every 2 years, **I shouldn’t need to prove it works anymore** – it works. Give me the money to develop the organisations.”

“I’m over applying for funding for the next year – that’s **short-termism**. Charitable status – I had to sign to say my home could be on the line – the foolishness that we’ve had to go through. Community leaders running around to explain their group and prove themselves over and over. We need investment for minimum five years.”

“When I do proposals now, I put **copyright**. My proposal was taken, and the work was given to a company – my exact teaching structure.”

“I find there’s an **inequitable** distribution of funding. I helped the borough to complete the application form, but since then our little organisation hasn’t received anything.”

A Successful model

# Community cohesion cup

## The organisation:

based in deprived area, high proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people

provides support in terms of employment skills & volunteering opportunities (along with sport or physical activity)

Lottery funding and fundraising activities such as bag packing

**In order to befriend local Police authority and eliminate friction between Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and Police:**

Create football tournament, where teams represent different nationalities, along with team from police

Provide kit etc., winners play at a large stadium, with a lot of supporters

Also have different organisations demonstrating their services (e.g. fire service)

## Factors of success:

Popular amongst African diaspora

The sport element unites people, and overcomes barriers

## Challenges:

One off event, challenge is to continue initiative throughout the year

Don't have close links with local decision makers & difficult to get funding

Those areas where Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities are a small minority, difficult to get the numbers for such an event

Would like to expand, and link up with other similar models across the UK

## Impact:

- Overcome barriers
- Increase community cohesion
- More Black, Asian and minority ethnic people volunteering with police
- Overcome prejudice against Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities



# Recommendations for Sported

1. Allow capacity for BLM working group to discuss findings and take actions forward

2. Consider main recommendations from focus groups:

- Continue safe spaces (like the focus groups) for groups to discuss and share experiences
- Consider establishing working group of members to develop some ideas from the focus groups, (e.g. to support linking up Community Cohesion football tournaments across the UK)

- Challenge Sports Councils and NGBs to review their representation and pathways to certain positions, (e.g. by supporting small set of groups to draft open letter)

- Identify leaders within sport from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities (sports people, journalists, sports managers, etc). Provide platforms/spotlights to elevate their voice, provide channels for community groups to connect with these individuals.

- Encourage review of potential bias in funding streams, questioning if they are really written for the audience they are aimed at

3. Generate multi-media content, including case studies, that shows our members successfully tackling racism in their communities

4. More appropriate representation in Sported at all levels (Trustees, staff, and especially volunteer team)

5. When having conversations about race and inclusion, we should start with participants describing their own identity (including some protected characteristics) and say “I agree to be open and honest”

# Thank You!

## To the group leaders who took part in focus groups:

Aspire Boxing

Creative Academies Network

Highfield Rangers FC

KB in the Community & Warriors BB

Oldham Boxing and Personal  
Development Centre

Muslim Women's Association of  
Edinburgh

RollaDome All Skate

SchBall School of Basketball

The Race Equality Centre

The Blair Project

Unity Boxing Club/ Mannngham Mills

## To the group leaders who took part in 1 to 1 conversations:

Boots and Beards

Great Horton Church Cricket Club

Horn Development Association

Street Soccer NI

Preston United Youth  
Development Project

## To volunteers who facilitated the sessions:

David Williams

David Cope

## To Sport England who funded the research.

