

# Using the Power of Sport to Build Good Inter Faith Relations

## A Symposium

14 November 2017  
Leicester Tigers  
Welford Road Stadium, Leicester



**Sporting Equals**

Promoting ethnic diversity in sport & physical activity



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THE INTER FAITH NETWORK FOR THE UK  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SPORTING EQUALS

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# About the Day

The UK is increasingly diverse and how people of different backgrounds get on with each other is ever more important.

Sport is important in its own right. It is also a key route for helping people engage with each other, for breaking down barriers of ignorance, prejudice and suspicion and creating a sense of cooperation for the common good. An underexplored but very important aspect of that is inter faith interaction through sport.

During Inter Faith Week 2017, the Inter Faith Network for the UK and Sporting Equals brought together a range of practitioners from sport, inter faith and faith bodies to explore some key questions:

- How can sport help people of different backgrounds to meet one another, come to understand each other better and develop skills for cooperation?
- What are some of the ways, at national and local levels, that organisations – from national governing bodies through to local community programmes – are furthering inter faith understanding and cooperation through sport?

A wide range of people attended from national sports organisations, regional sports clubs and faith and inter faith organisations.

#InterFaithSport was used as the Twitter hashtag for the day.

# Welcome and setting the context for the day

## The Rt Revd Richard Atkinson OBE Co-Chair, Inter Faith Network for the UK

**Bishop Richard Atkinson:** A warm welcome to you all. I would like to begin today, as we usually do at Inter Faith Network meetings, with a brief moment of silence, bearing in mind all those working for inter faith understanding and cooperation.

*A brief period of silence was observed.*

Thank you. It is tremendous to be at the Leicester Tigers ground, whose staff have been most welcoming and whose CEO Simon Cohen came to greet us over refreshments earlier.

I am one of the two Co-Chairs of the Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN). Jatinder Singh Birdi, who is not able to be with us today, but sends his warm good wishes for the event, is the other.

IFN was founded in 1987. It has for over 30 years been working with its member national faith communities, inter faith bodies and academic and educational bodies and others to promote and support inter faith understanding and cooperation in the UK. It leads on Inter Faith Week – which is happening this week – which is its biggest programme. From time to time it holds special focus events that can help encourage new thinking and partnerships. Today's is one such.

The event has been specially timed to take place in Inter Faith Week and is an important contribution to that. Leicester is

a city which every year puts on a fantastic array of events for the Week and it is therefore particularly appropriate that this event is taking place here.

We will be hearing from the CEO of Sporting Equals, Arun Kang, shortly. The Inter Faith Network for the UK is delighted to be working in partnership with Sporting Equals on this important event and to have such a tremendous array of presenters and other participants.

We come together today conscious of the huge opportunities that sport offers to build understanding, to build partnership, to build engagement and for people just to enjoy themselves together. Those are some of the themes we'll be exploring.

We will be rejoicing in all the positives but we are also all aware of the context in which we are working which has some negative aspects. We know all too well the issues of extremism, not only extremism which claims an Islamic basis, but also far right extremism and its other manifestations. There are other issues, too, such as prejudice and hate crime. I was reading Tell MAMA's Annual Report in the last couple of days – and noting the growth in the reporting of hate crime that it records. There is also the challenge of religious and faith literacy and illiteracy. There are also the more general things, about which there seem to have been a number of comments in recent days, about the extent to which we know our

neighbours or not, the basic issue of knowing those who live with us. The Government is working at the moment to develop its new integration strategy, looking at what integration means in our society today and the nature of the values in our society.

On a lighter note, I have few sporting trophies! I think the last one I received – and Canon Paul Hackwood, who is Executive Director of the Church Urban Fund and is here today, probably has the same trophy – was when we played together as an inter faith team here in Leicester against the police. Certainly our Sikh and Muslim colleagues couldn't quite work out why they had an unfit Christian playing alongside them, but somehow we won the competition! What I remembered from it was that it was a good occasion, it built friendships, it was an experience that we shared together, it built bridges with the police and it was just one small example of the sort of ideas we are talking about today.

# The power of sport to develop and strengthen inter faith understanding and trust

Arun Kang, Chief Executive Officer  
Sporting Equals

**Bishop Atkinson:** It is a great delight to welcome and introduce Arun Kang, the Chief Executive Officer of Sporting Equals, who are the co-organisers and deliverers of today's event.

Arun is an authority on diversity and community cohesion and has worked in these areas for over 20 years and is a member of the Institute of Community Cohesion. During his time at Sporting Equals, he has founded the British Ethnic Diversity Sports Awards and pioneered the 'Faith centre physical activity model' among many other achievements. He will be speaking about sport as a positive agent in building community cohesion and the important role it can play in building inter faith co-operation and understanding.

*A copy of the PowerPoint slides used in Mr Kang's presentation are at the end of this note.*

**Arun Kang:** Good morning everybody and thanks for making the effort to come to this event at Leicester Tigers today. I am a Wasps man myself but will try and keep my emotions to myself!

I shall be setting the theme for the day and offering a few reflections from a community cohesion angle from the experiences I have had within the sports centre.

I'd like to start with a few slides of demographics. When we are working in communication, I don't believe that we can split faith from race so I will be looking at both. This slide [Slide 2] shows the ethnicity of the population in some of the key cities in the UK. You can see that in London, Manchester and Birmingham the percentage of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities is heading towards 50%. The percentage overall in England and Wales is around 14%.

The next slide [Slide 3] shows the religious affiliation of the population by geographical regions of England and in Wales. It shows that there is greater diversity in particular in London, West Midlands and the North West.

The latest figures for hate crime offences in 2016/17 were published last month. [Slide 4] They show that there were around 85,000 hate crime offences during that period. Taken together, the hate crimes that were racially or religiously aggravated amount to about 85% of the overall figure. This timeline [Slide 5] shows the trends in those hate crimes from April 2013 to March 2017. It shows some key incidents that may have affected hate crimes and clearly shows that there was a spike in these just after the EU referendum campaign ended. I believe that to reflect the sort of covert racism that people talk about and covert religious discrimination that people might

have, a lot of which has gone underground. I think after the EU referendum people felt a little bit more confident to actually speak their views and, in this case, there was a huge increase in racially and religiously aggravated offences. This slide [Slide 6] shows the results from a survey conducted with the police forces about the 11 month period after the EU Referendum result. There was only about a 30% response rate to the survey but those police forces which did give their information showed a huge increase in incidents in their areas, with an overall increase of about 23%.

So what can we do about this? How can we build stronger local communities?

One key element has to be building better, stronger, inter faith connections, building empathy around faith diversity and making people understand the importance of faith and the commonalities between faiths.

I think we need to start by considering the potential perpetrators and what makes them act the way they do. [Slide 8] One of the reasons for their actions is their life experiences and the knowledge that they have gained over the years. Those life experiences can be through education, through schooling. Where was their school? What sort of religious education did they have? Was it mainly Christian with just one day on Sikhism and Hinduism and Islam and so forth? Has that led to ignorance? What are they engaged in? What papers are they reading? It might be that their friends or their family members have influenced their thinking.

There are three interconnected stages that I think that a potential perpetrator will go through before enacting their prejudiced views through a hate crime. In Psychology they call it the Cognitive Triangle – thinking, feeling and behaving. So the thought process begins it all. The thought process is made up of all those life

experiences. So if you had little understanding, little engagement with, other faiths, your thinking might be very negative. This, in turn, can lead to negative or even aggressive feelings and this can lead you to behave in a certain way, such as verbal abuse against someone or a physical attack or other hate crime.

So I believe that any project that we do around inter faith or community cohesion needs to tackle that thought process. If we can break down, through education and empowerment, people's assumptions, their stereotypes and their prejudices (which all of us have) all the better.

So what are the key ingredients of any project that works through inter faith relations? [Slide 9]

- We definitely need to be engaging young people. They are key.
- We also need to engage the wider community – their parents, their neighbourhood, the school, even the workplaces of a number of people – to try and get that cohesion angle across the whole locality.
- Myth busting is important. When doing an event we need to be thinking about how we break down those myths about different religions and races.
- Social interaction is really important; it breaks the ice and also helps to breakdown the negative perceptions of individuals and their backgrounds. Sport, especially team sport, is a great icebreaker.
- No project should take place without open dialogue, talking about those really sensitive difficult areas and topics that we talk about in religion. After the icebreaker we want people to be opening up on what they feel or what they are thinking about. So an open dialogue is

really important to have. And the dialogue can't be just a one-off day without dialogue for the rest of the 12 months.

- Finally, it is also about focussing on commonalities of faith. We did a project with young people in Croydon very recently through the Mayor of London, and Shaheen Bi, my colleague, will give more details about that this afternoon. One of the talks was done by someone from Faiths Together in Croydon who came and talked about the commonalities between faiths and also about the work that inter faith networks are doing together united. It was great for young people to hear about what was happening locally for their communities. But the agenda also needs to be rooted in the local agenda and how that makes a difference to a young person in particular. Local facilities, like sporting facilities, street lighting and safety for older people – when you discuss these with a group of young people you realise we're all in the same boat. We need to focus more on the local issues than the global issues.

Today's event is for practitioners so we need to consider what we can do on the ground to make a difference. These are my 7 key tips. [Slide 10] I would also add that the baseline is that you need to talk to young people initially about their starting point, so you can really have an understanding of what impact your project is having.

1. You need to do local intelligence gathering. Go into the hot spot areas where the tension actually is, which is probably going to be the most difficult for you to do. You don't want it to become a 'saris and samosas' multi-cultural event that we used to have in the 80's and 90's. You actually want to make a difference and have a real social impact on those communities. So local intelligence is really important. Find

those potential hot spots and then take your project into those communities.

2. Partnership working is absolutely fundamental. It's important to get the partners involved locally at a very early stage and they can help engage the young people who have the greatest needs that you want to get involved in the projects.
3. In terms of the sport itself, we don't just want a football match or a cricket match. We need to be more creative, particularly with young people, especially to attract them in and then to keep them involved with the project. I don't think it should be a one-off project. Doing it over a few weeks or months is a lot better and more enticing. We have done a project before with aerobic football, we've tried sailing and a number of other types of sporting elements. We've also tried something called 'switch sport' which is fantastic – it's a three-way sport involving netball, basketball and handball. Young people loved it because they were offered a level playing field. Nobody had tried it before so it didn't matter whether you were male or female or good or bad at a particular sport, everyone was in the same boat. That was a great icebreaker and it was great to break down some mistaken perceptions then as well.
4. There has to be a mix of learning, from workshops and masterclasses, as well as the social interaction. After the learning you have to open the debate and talk about difficult issues. The debate is key.
5. My slide refers to focusing on commonalities as the next tip. I spoke about that earlier so I won't go over that now.
6. The inter faith element is the golden thread running through that project.

You need to be talking about that through the sporting offer, through the masterclasses and through the workshops.

7. Partnership working is key to the long term sustainability of a project. Where do those young people go after this project, especially if you've inspired a social justice element? What is happening locally that they can get involved in? You can't just walk away and leave no legacy from the project. That's when you need to bring in agencies such as the local authority with their youth forums; county sport partnerships who can empower young people through coaching badges; voluntary agencies to allow them to continue volunteering; local universities; and so forth. You don't want to let go of them now you have got them involved in what you are talking about. You want to try and mould them into social cohesion champions for your localities.

Finally, I'd like to show you a much used quote of Nelson Mandela. [Slide 11] If I haven't already sold to you the importance of inter faith and sport and the importance of talking to young people, then hopefully Nelson Mandela will:

*"Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was despair. It is more powerful than Government in breaking down racial barriers".*

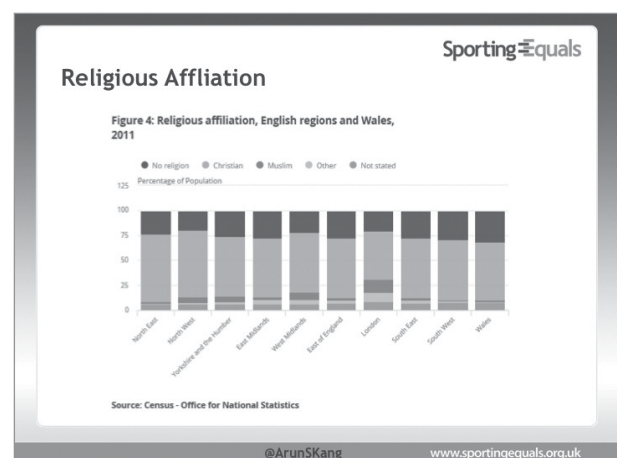
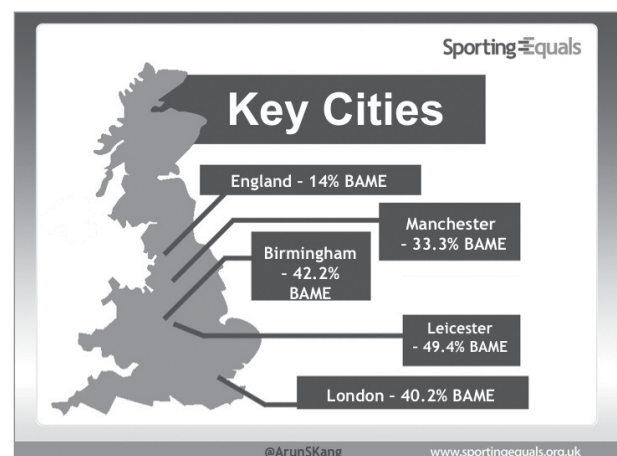
Thank you very much.

Sporting Equals

## The Power of Sport to Build Good Inter Faith Relations

Arun Kang - Chief Executive  
Leicester Tigers  
14<sup>th</sup> November 2017

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Sporting Equals

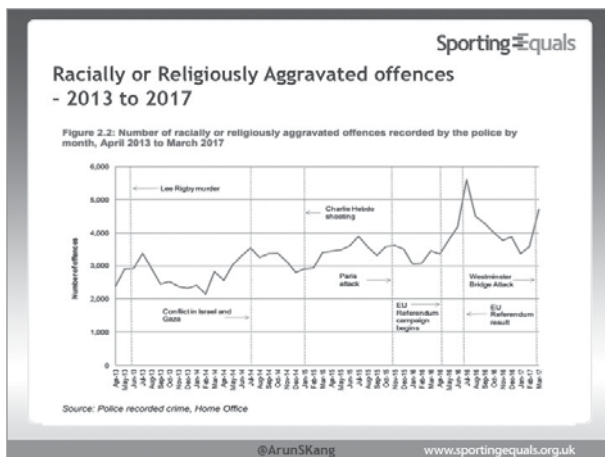
### Hate Crime Offences 2016/17

- ▶ 62,685 (78%) **race** hate crimes
- ▶ 9,157 (11%) **sexual orientation** hate crimes
- ▶ 5,949 (7%) **religious** hate crimes
- ▶ 5,558 (7%) **disability** hate crimes
- ▶ 1,248 (2%) **transgender** hate crimes

Source: Hate Crime, England and Wales, Statistical Bulletin, October 2017

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### Projects that promote Inter Faith Relations

- ▶ Engage young people and wider community
- ▶ 'Myth busting'
- ▶ Social interaction (sport)
- ▶ Open Dialogue
- ▶ Focus on Commonalities

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### Post EU Referendum - 11months

- ▶ Incidents surged by 23 per cent – from 40,741 to 49,921:
  - Gwent (Wales) – 77% (from 367 to 649)
  - Kent – 66% (from 874 to 1,452)
  - Warwickshire – 65% (286 to 471)
  - Nottinghamshire 57% (681 to 1,071)

Source: The Independent, July 2017

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### Key Tips for Inter Faith and sport projects

1. Gather local intelligence (community tension)
2. Build network of partners locally
3. Be creative with the sport offer to attract the young people
4. Ensure there is a mix of learning, social interaction and debate
5. Project focuses on local commonalities instead of difference
6. Inter Faith element – Masterclass and workshops
7. Partnership working for long term sustainability

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## Building Stronger Local Communities

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### Stronger Inter Faith Relations through Sport

▶ *"Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was despair. It is more powerful than Government in breaking down racial barriers".*

*Nelson Mandela*

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### Stronger Local Communities

- ▶ Perpetrators act on their life experiences and knowledge gained
- ▶ 3 interwoven stages:
  - Thinking
  - Feeling
  - Behaving
- ▶ Tackle thought process
  - Education and empowerment
  - Change assumptions, stereotypes and prejudices

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# Inter faith engagement – a key area for development

Tim Mathias, Inclusion and Equalities Executive  
Premiership Rugby

**Bishop Atkinson:** It is great pleasure to welcome Tim Mathias, who we are delighted to have giving an input from Premiership Rugby in this context. Tim will be speaking about the vital importance of sports bodies developing strong links with communities and looking to find ways for good inter faith relations and cohesion locally through routes such as community engagement programmes.

*A copy of the PowerPoint slides used in Mr Mathias's presentation is at the end of this note.*

**Tim Mathias:** Thank you so much. I work for Premiership Rugby. We are at the home of the Leicester Tigers, one of our most famous and historic clubs which dates back about 140 years. The Tigers have won the Premiership about ten times and are one of the most successful clubs, continuing to produce players for England.

Premiership Rugby runs the professional side of the game in this country. [Slide 2] It is not very old. Professional Rugby has only really been going for about 20 years and previously it was just an amateur sport. Premiership Rugby takes care of the league, distributes commercial funds, television rights and so forth for 12 clubs up and down the country from Exeter Chiefs in the South West up to Newcastle Falcons in the North East. There are several clubs in this area including the Wasps and Northampton Saints as well as the Leicester Tigers.

We are a business. [Slide 4] We have a specific Strategic Plan for teams to grow commercially. We are fairly unique in that in our minimum standards for all our clubs you have to do community work. We understand the importance of community work and reaching out to people within our specific geographic location. So every time we bring in an investment, for example a television rights deal, we invest a certain amount of that in to a community programme for young people to benefit people in our area. Community is a key focus. Rugby has to be used as a force for positive change. Work in schools is the bulk of our work. We also try and build an affiliation with our local team and we also do some work overseas in places like Brazil and Argentina. As it happens, about 175 million households have premiership Rugby beamed into their televisions each weekend in 200 countries.

There was a real watershed moment for us a few years back when we started working with the Equality and Human Rights Commission. [Slide 5] They are a publically funded body and they got some money from the Department for Culture Media and Sport for the work in question. We were so privileged and honoured to get a grant from them. We used it in three different ways on a campaign called 'Rugby for All': firstly, to increase women and girls playing rugby; secondly, to promote access to disabled people in our stadia; and, thirdly, to reach out to a new

diverse audience, especially BAME communities.

What we found, going to schools and community locations with fantastic rugby coaches, was that after 18 months' worth of rugby delivery, 29% of respondents said they had met people they wouldn't normally meet in day to day interaction. And there was a 30% increase in the percentage of respondents mixing with someone from a different ethnic group. The study was conducted by Demos, an independent thinktank. It proved that rugby, and sport more widely, is a perfect way to use a level playing field to bring people together. We call that an optimum condition. Everyone has a fair chance.

I want to tell you about one example from the Rugby For All programme. Near Leicester is a place called Evington which has a mosque called the Masjid Umar. Leicester Tigers' coaches were emboldened by Sporting Equals, who delivered some fantastic training for our community coaches along the lines of cultural awareness. We were able to knock on the door of the masjid and offer them some Rugby sessions. But as you note from the photo of these cheeky chappies here throwing the rugby ball around, with a Leicester Tigers coach, [Slide 5] this wasn't about getting muddy and smashing each other down at an amateur sports club or amateur rugby club it was just in their main hall. We were able to adapt the game to suit their needs. The chaps have all got a smile on their faces. They really, really enjoyed it and some are still playing now. It was their first contact with rugby.

We need to change the perception of rugby and offer it to a more diverse audience. We are a commercial outfit with a professional sports league and professional sports clubs and can do that. Leicester Tigers, for example, have a 25,000 seat arena and they invited the chaps from the Umar Masjid along to a European fixture under

floodlights. 22,000 people turned up to watch the match. The young chaps had a run around on the pitch and passed a rugby ball around on the pitch at half time in front of lots and lots of people. The mosque surprised us. My understanding is that adult attendees at the mosque donate a percentage to charitable causes. At half time they presented a cheque to the Matt Hampson Foundation. [Slide 8] Matt Hampson used to play for Leicester Tigers and England at representative level before sustaining a neck injury. We were all surprised and amazed that they presented Matt Hampson with a cheque. So this group from the mosque who had an ethos of avoiding alcohol and had never come to the stadium here before were given a round of applause, were shaking hands after a half time display. It was possibly an indication or an example of the role that a professional sports club can play in reaching out broadening horizons, but also being a centre point of community.

I remember coming to a meeting here about two and half years ago. Leicester Football Club were about to win the Premier League and there was a real buzz about the city. I truly believe that professional sports teams have a role to play in increasing that buzz and civic pride.

A colleague of mine, Jenna Bonser from Leicester Rugby Football Union and England Rugby, is here today. We are working together on a newly launched programme called Project Rugby. [Slide 10] It's all about changing the perceptions of rugby. While we typically think rugby is about big chaps getting stuck in, getting muddy and smashing into each other, we want to really diversify the game. Project Rugby is a campaign but it is also a participation programme. Leicester are delivering it currently in a Sikh football club, the Guru Nanak Football Club, nearby. The key is changing perceptions. One part of that is playing in different locations. For example, we arranged a

game underneath the A40, a large motorway in West London. [Slide 10] Again there is not a speck of mud in sight!

Our aim, with Rugby For All and Project Rugby is to get as many people playing as possible. I like this little chap in Trafalgar Square in 2015 just enjoying the game and running around. [Slide 11]

So, finally, it is in our strategic plan, as a commercial organisation to be the best and most competitive league in the world. Very recently we brought together a group working on our strategic plans towards 2021. In terms of broadening our horizons and being more diverse, we also want to be the most welcoming league in the world. Part of that is working through each protective characteristic, BAME audits are certainly on our agenda and we shall hopefully work with Sporting Equals and the Inter Faith Network for the UK as well.

I think that's it for me. I'm happy to take any questions. I rushed through that, I only had ten minutes to give you a positive steer of Rugby Union, Leicester Tigers and what we do, but I hope it's been useful. Thank you.

## Q and A

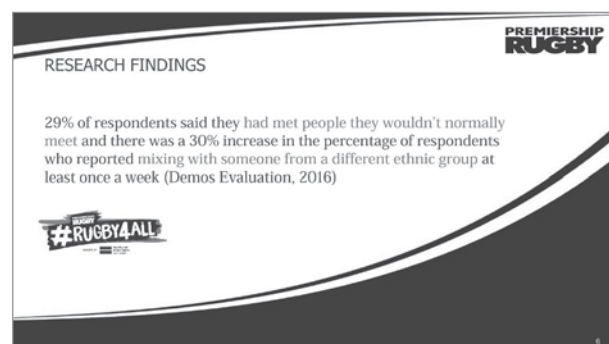
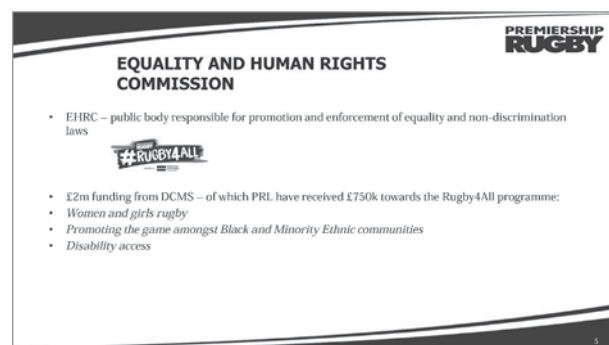
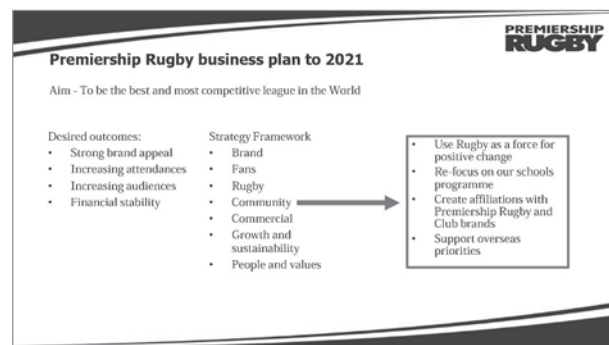
**Professor John Williams (University of Leicester Unit for Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement):** I'm a local, having lived here for 40 years or more. One thing that I have not felt has changed much in Rugby Union over this time is the access of people from different faith backgrounds have to the local network of Rugby Union clubs in and around the city. When I go and visit clubs around here, they don't look very multi faith or multi ethnic to me. They don't seem to reach out to different types of audiences. These are voluntary organisations and I think they like people who are like them and they want to maintain that particular kind of

solidarity. That's difficult to break down and to talk to them about how they should manage change. Is Premiership Rugby interested or connected with that problem? Do you recognise it and do you think it's an issue?

**Tim Mathias:** My background is cricket. I play cricket. I used to work for England and Wales Cricket Board, then worked at Chance to Shine. We've seen with cricket there is a huge participation base, certainly of people of South Asian heritage, but they don't necessarily come along to the stadia and watch first class cricket. Whereas in rugby there are very few of an ethnic minority that actually play. Sport England data suggests that about 0.5% playing base are non-white British. So it is a particular challenge with a base line of near enough nothing. Our job is about growth and getting more people to our stadia and watching on TV. So that is certainly on our agenda. The best way we can do that we feel is by getting a rugby ball into people's hands and that is what we are going to do with Project Rugby. One of our biggest barriers, certainly in Rugby Union, is the perception of it. People closely associate Rugby Union with getting muddy, getting injured, and there is certainly an element of alcohol involved, certainly at grassroots rugby level. That is the issue that we are fighting with Project Rugby – to get the rugby ball into as many people's hands as possible but also to change the perception so that anybody can play and reduce those barriers.

**Dr Harriet Crabtree (Inter Faith Network for the UK):** If you are thinking about something that brings, for example, young people of different faith backgrounds together, what kind of balance do you feel is helpful between things which have an educational dimension and focus on just being together and developing relationships?

**Tim Mathias:** I think we have done quite well in the participatory side of the game, but we have never specifically targeted a religious group or an ethnic group. We have brought people together. We have trained up our coaches to approach certainly some social issues, such as sex education, and we have worked on fitness and nutrition with specific programmes also. But we link that into our sports coaching. These are social skills. These are also mentoring skills. As we increasingly talk about integration, we talk about community cohesion. I can certainly see some bolt-ons, so instead of just having a rugby coach or football coach or cricket coach we bolt them into the sports coaching itself. I hope it helps a little bit.







## Dialogue on the spot

*There then followed a few minutes for participants to engage in conversation with others, particularly those they didn't know, about what had emerged so far from the presentations in terms of themes.*



# Clubs and inter faith initiatives working to create bridges of understanding locally

**Matt Parish, Director of Education and Inclusion**  
Burnley Football Club

**Afrasiab Anwar MBE, Community Faith Coordinator**  
Building Bridges in Burnley

**Bishop Atkinson:** For this next section we will be having a joint input from Matt Parish of Burnley Football Club and Afrasiab Anwar of Building Bridges in Burnley. They will be talking about their joint work on the Building Bridges Community Cup where teams of 11 to 13 year olds from mosques and churches from across Burnley come together to battle it out for a coveted cup. Matt will also be sharing some reflections about how football clubs can encourage positive community relations, including inter faith tolerance and respect.

*A copy of the PowerPoint slides used in the presentation are at the end of this note.*

**Afrasiab Anwar:** B-ismi-llahi r-rahmani r-rahim. In the name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind. Good morning and salam, peace to everyone. Although I am employed as the Faith Community Coordinator for Lancashire County Council, working in Burnley, my background is actually in sport. I started off as a volunteer. 15 years ago after we had the disturbances, or what we locals call the riots, in Burnley. I set up a Junior Football Club for local children that live in the community that I grew up in.

I remember when I set the Junior club up in Burnley one of the biggest challenges that I faced was that everybody I spoke to said I needed to set up Asian leagues, similar to what is going on in towns like Blackburn and Preston where the Asian young people are playing against one and another. I refused to do that. I wanted the children from this community to feel comfortable to go to work in any part of our town and to feel that the whole town belongs to them not just the area that they live in. So we started to enter our teams into the mainstream leagues. 15 years later we got 250 children, 7 or 8 teams, to take part every single week. They represented the local community but they travelled across the whole of the town.

Off the back of my volunteering I ended up securing some employment working as a Sports Development Officer for Burnley Borough Council. There I met a local Roman Catholic priest, Fr Brian Kealey, who approached me and said he'd like to do a football tournament between children from the Asian communities and children from the white communities. So I suggested we get teams from the local mosques and local churches to have a tournament. We ran a tournament working with two of our local mosques and two of

our Roman Catholic churches. The tournament was a huge success and for years we talked about doing it again. For whatever reason we never got round to that. However, just this year, Father Brian approached me again, and said, "Do you know we met 15 years ago and since that day we have been friends. So imagine if those young people who we introduced to one another could carry on meeting each other and have similar sorts of friendships. Why don't we do that again." So this year we decided to run that tournament again with the support of Burnley Football Club.

My involvement with sport has never been for the sake of creating elite athletes or just for the sake of sport. It has always been to try and educate and to try to get our young people to meet each other. It's about looking at the bigger picture and the wider impact that sport can have. Off the back of the tournament I have just mentioned I happened to be working with some of the same young people on another project two days after the attack at the Manchester Arena. There were Christian and Muslim young people involved. We decided to ask them what their thoughts were on what had happened in Manchester. When the Christian children started talking they spoke about who they knew who had been at the arena and all had stories to tell. When I looked around the room every single one of the Muslim children had their head down and they didn't say a word in the 40 minute session. So I gave all the children a piece of paper and I asked them to write down their thoughts and fears on moving forward now that they had become friends through this football project. Every single one of the Muslim children had written 'My biggest fear is that everybody will now think I am a terrorist'. So through that project we have now created friendships between people who are Christian and people who are Muslim and hopefully those friendships will flourish. The purpose of this project is much wider than just football. Although I

am a Burnley fan and I want to see more of the Muslim children and the Asian children visiting and watching Burnley play, the project is about the wider impact that sport can have. It is also about the impact that Burnley Football Club can have, as a focal point in our town, on the future of our young people. I'm now going to hand over to Matt to talk about how the project is run.

**Matt Parish:** As you can tell from my accent I didn't grow up in Burnley! I have only been there 12 months and I am still learning about it. I'm going to focus on the grassroots side of our project, what worked for us and some of what we can take away from it.

Burnley FC in the Community has 5 areas of focus: Education, Inclusion, Sport, Health and Community Facilities. [Slide 2] My focus is on the first 2 of these.

Burnley FC in the Community began, in its current incarnation, just under 4 years ago. Last season it engaged with just under 24,000 people. One of the key reasons for its growth has been partnership working in Burnley, Pendle and East Lancashire. The Building Bridges Community Cup [Slide 4] event was arranged in partnership with Burnley and Pendle Faith Centre. As my colleague said, it was between people from the churches and mosques in the town and it took place at Turf Moor's indoor training facility. It was not the usual kids involved. The target group were young people that wouldn't ordinarily engage in football or sport more generally.

What went well? [Slide 5] The teams were selected on the day and the kids didn't have any choice, so the teams were mixed. They were 11 to 13 year olds in Key Stage 3. During the icebreaker activity we just mixed the kids in together and before they knew it they were in a team and were playing together. I'm not just saying this to make it sound great, but there were generally no issues. After the disturbances

in Burnley 15 years ago, one of the responses was to change the school system so that instead of 10 secondary schools there are now 5 bigger secondary schools, so that young people perhaps could mix and were more likely to see each other in school. But some of the young people that played together for our event had never met each other before. It was not just that those from the mosque hadn't met those from the churches, it was amongst the churches (the Roman Catholic church and the Church of England church) as well.

The big plus for us was that the people taking part were not regular football or sport participants. In my organisation we talk about the 80/20 factor: if 80% of people are doing alright, the community, football clubs and other sports clubs should be engaging the other 20% that need more support. I cannot tell you exactly what that is in Burnley but the principle is the same. Another big by-product of the tournament was seeing the parents support the team regardless of their religion or race; they were just supporting their kids and they wanted their team to win.

What were the challenges? One was that we had to rely on the churches and the community groups to bring the kids. We were not used to that as we were used to being in charge. And, of course, we had to ensure that the tournament didn't clash with any of the group's existing activities. But that is what partnership is all about – working with other groups, meeting their needs as well as our needs and working out how that all fits into the Football Club's vision.

Burnley FC in the Community's mission is to inspire, support and deliver change in communities and that is what we endeavour and do on a daily basis. [Slide 7] I am proud to say we won 'North West Football Community Club of the year' last

year and we were up against Everton, Manchester United, Liverpool and lots of big clubs like that so that was a proud achievement for us. We've done quite well on the pitch this year as well – though not quite a Leicester yet, we are 7th at the moment so who knows!

As a club we are striving to work with everyone in the community we serve. Formerly I was at Charlton Athletic Community Trust in South East London. We recognised that the fan base percentage didn't reflect the local community and that also happens in other places and outreach can help change that. I know Alan Sefton and Samir Singh are here from Arsenal in the Community and growing up in London I remember going to Arsenal games. Arsenal were probably one of the earlier pioneers of doing something about that and getting more people from BAME communities into the ground. We still have got work to do at Burnley. The BAME breakdown in Burnley is almost the same as the national average which is 12% to 14%. I think it fluctuates around 5% and 6% at most home games. I think the community arms of clubs have got a massive part to play.

Arun used Nelson Mandela's quote earlier so he has stolen my thunder! But it is what we do and I think it is very true. [Slide 8]

I am going to deliver an FA workshop this afternoon in Liverpool so I shall need to leave quite quickly, but these are my contact details should anyone wish to contact me afterwards. [Slide 9]

## Q and A

**Q:** How important is the Burnley badge to engage with these communities? How important is it to be from a professional sports club with a badge on your chest?



**Matt Parish:** I answer from the perspective of having grown up in London and worked for a big London club for almost 20 years. What smacked me in the face really when I went to Burnley was that everyone in Burnley and Pendle supports Burnley. A lot of the kids we worked with on a Friday evening support Burnley. They don't necessarily all come to the games but that is not just about race, that's also an age demographic because most season ticket holders in football clubs are over 40. I think it's massive – in Burnley it's the biggest hook. But then again it is what you do once you get people through the door. The badge will attract people but if the provision you run is not of a high enough quality then they won't stay.

**Afrasiab Anwar:** In terms of the power of the badge, yes. I am a Burnley lad, born and bred and it is the centre, it is our identity in terms of who we are as local people and we are very passionate about the Club. As Matt says, sometimes those young people might not walk into the stadium but it is because they have never had that experience. For example, when I was younger, I did not have my dad taking me to football, like you would have in a traditional white community where the grandparents or the parents would take their children. But now that I go, I take my nephews and my daughter along, who is one year old, so hopefully they will grow up as Burnley fans for the rest of their lives! A few years ago our junior football club bought 20 season tickets at a discounted rate through working with the Club and we took different children each week from our club who had an experience of going and watching Burnley play. Fortunately for us that season we also got promoted! Following that, at least 30 of our young people from our local community are now season ticket holders. So it is about investing and sustaining the investment that we have as well.

**Matt Parish:** One quick point. I know there are different people from different organisations in the room. Sometimes you have to try to explain to the stadium manager or the commercial director the importance of giving use of the facilities for free. We have got unbelievable access. I am fortunate enough to oversee an education facility with 6 classrooms in the stadium overlooking the pitch. We are getting the kids in during the week so that the football ground isn't this alien place that they have never been to before, so that when they come along on the match day, they feel comfortable in that environment. I think that is a big part of what we do. The other point that I wanted to make is that through the kids programme that we run in partnership with the team in Daneshouse we offer all young people of a certain age the opportunity to volunteer on that. The take up from Daneshouse is the biggest percentage rise across all the programmes. So there is a will in the young people to get involved. I think it is about the Football Club making the stadium as accessible and welcoming as possible.



## OVERALL ENGAGEMENT

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Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair.

— Nelson Mandela —

AL QUOTES

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- **What was the Building Bridges Community Cup?**
- In partnership with the Burnley & Pendle Faith Centre
- Teams of young people aged 11 – 13/Key Stage 3
- Representatives from Churches and Mosques in the town
- Held at Turf Moors indoor training facility
- Faith groups representatives brought the young people, tournament run by BFCitC staff

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- **What worked well – positives?**
- Teams selected on the day, groups mixed up across teams
- Ice Breaker activity included getting to know each others names and tournament rules
- Different community groups played together, just got on with it!
- The young people taking part were not regular football or sport participants
- Seeing parents and supporters of the teams supporting, regardless of faith group etc.

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- **Any Challenges?**
- From a BFCitC perspective, relying on/leaving recruitment to other groups
- At the same time, insisting on certain parameters e.g. age groups
- Ensuring the tournament didn't clash with any groups existing activities

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- **How did/does Building Bridges fit into BFCitC's vision**
- Mission - Inspire, Support and deliver change in communities
- Daily basis we endeavour to use the BFC badge to engage
- Target groups are those that may not ordinarily take part, mix or be picked up by other services/provision
- As a club we are striving to work with everyone within the community we serve

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# What do we gain from inter faith sports and training?

**Sadia Akram**

Leader of a women's sport programme in Manchester

**The Revd Canon Paul Hackwood**

Executive Chair, Church Urban Fund and Director, Near Neighbours

**Bishop Atkinson:** It is a pleasure now to welcome Sadia Akram, who will be speaking about the impact on her and other women's lives of the women's sports programme initially run by the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ) and funded through the Near Neighbours programme of the Church Urban Fund which took place in Manchester.

**Sadia Akram:** This is a project that I was asked to be involved with as a participant and also as a facilitator. I was approached by CCJ because of the work that I do in the community in Manchester. They asked if I could do some activity around women's sports. Near Neighbours, which was supporting the project, said that they were looking at Prestwich where there was a large Jewish community but also a Muslim community, so it made sense to involve the Muslim community as well. So it started with me speaking to lots of people, finding out what this would mean, looking for venues, thinking of different sports and asking women to come along to this.

We started off describing it as just a sports event for women only, without putting a faith or inter faith badge on it. This was on purpose so that people did not feel that we wanted to put them in a box or we just

wanted to do something to produce facts and figures that we could use afterwards. That is also why I have not put a PowerPoint presentation up today because my talk is really about the quality and the friendships that came out of this.

The women wanted somewhere safe and to have a good time so we tried different types of venues. One of the venues that really worked for the Jewish women was the Maccabi Centre in Prestwich so we used that. We have continued to use that because that is a space where the Orthodox Jewish women feel very safe and we found that in other venues we did not get many Jewish women and if they did come, they were only from the Reform community.

Unfortunately then our funding ran out and we didn't know what to do. But the women really wanted to continue so we continued using the trainer who loved our group because we were so enthusiastic. She did a few sessions for us completely free and we put some money towards it and we still continue that on a weekly basis. I set up a Whatsapp group so we continue talking through there. Eventually FODIP came to our rescue and helped us again with Near Neighbours.

Before I came here today I asked some of the women how they felt about the project. They said that they didn't know it was an inter faith project in advance but as soon as they arrived they felt wanted and valued and wanted to continue. They said they had found lots of people that they could make friends with and we get along and actually the main purpose is to keep fit. For me that was a 'tick tick win win' because that is exactly what I wanted to do. I did not want them to feel that I was asking them to come along because they were Christian, Jewish or Muslim. I just wanted them there because they were women who wanted to keep fit. Through this and through the Whatsapp group we have actually broken down some stereotypes and barriers and found we do get along and we have lots of similarities. For example, fasting days for different religious festivals are something we have in common and we send each other greetings on religious festivals on Whatsapp. It's those little things that actually make a massive difference.

The other point I'd like to make is that we have got to invest in people's ideas. This idea came from a young woman who said that it would be really good if we did a women's sports group and then for Near Neighbours and CCJ to invest in that to make it accessible for small community groups. It is the small grassroots, community groups, organisations or people that are coming together that make that amazing difference. For example, when the Manchester attack happened, on the Whatsapp group people were asking each other whether they were ok. Similarly, after the Brexit result there were Islamophobic and anti-Semitic attacks going on and we were looking out for each other. These things also make a massive difference.

We attend events together, we attend socials together and I guess it is that that has really come out of this. Yes, it was a women's project and it was an inter faith project but we kept that low key and those friendships evolved without us having to do too much directly. I'd be happy to share some of the other comments from the women with you later on.

**Bishop Atkinson:** One or two people here may just be wondering what Near Neighbours is, well it is great to have Paul Hackwood to tell us about that.

**Canon Paul Hackwood:** It is very good to be here. I almost had to get down on one knee when I saw the Chief Executive of the Tigers but I did not do it!

Near Neighbours is a programme that is about building relationships and connections between people across difference, be that religious difference, ethnic difference or whatever sort of difference. We have worked over the last 5 years with about a million people and we have 3 main programmes. First we give small grants, £250 to £5,000 for activities that people want to engage in. We build on what is already alive in communities, so we don't come in and tell people what to do, instead we work with what's already happening. Secondly, we have a number of leadership programmes, particularly with young people. Thirdly, we have started a piece of work now where we bring together people across difference and ask them what needs to be done in their neighbourhood to make it a better place. So we are very much at the centre of the whole integration agenda and we are funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government<sup>1</sup> as well as by donations.

It is great to be able to come today and to celebrate all this really good work that is

*1 Now the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government*

going on in local communities through the sports organisations that are here and also through connecting that with faith communities. I think we need to be mindful though, and we have already heard something about that today, that we are doing this in a particular sort of context and it is a context where some people don't believe that we can live together well and some people believe that we shouldn't live together well.

We have done a piece of research looking at these issues across the country and about a quarter to a third of people believe that inter faith, inter ethnic, community relations have broken down and we need to be very careful about our interactions with other people. So there is a real job to be done in connecting people together. I was a vicar for 10 years in Bradford and I went to visit a Muslim friend of mine. She is a Muslim woman about the same age as me and she had got onto the bus to go from Bradford town centre up to Thornbury where we lived and 5 young white men had accosted her, pushed her down the stairs of the bus, pulled off her scarf and told her to go home. For her that was an absolutely terrifying experience and that is the sort of thing that we are dealing with and the sort of thing that you are challenging through the work that you are doing and that we are celebrating today. We need to be very careful to recognise that that is really what the work that you are doing is about. It is changing the perception of people who have some very, very dodgy views.

Sadia has given a very good example of what work like this can be and we have heard a lot of examples across the morning about how we bring about the change. For those like me who are involved in this sort of area at national level in policy terms, there are three things that you have to do to get change to happen. Firstly, you have to have the right policies and the right laws in place and I think we can go quite a long

way down the road with that. Secondly, you have to understand the community that you are working with. Is Burnley the same as working in London? Is London the same as working in Leicester? Is Bradford the same as working in parts of Tower Hamlets? You really do have to understand the community that you are a part of in a way that takes seriously the needs of that community on the integration front. Sports clubs are right at the centre of community life. Thirdly, you have to engage people. It is no good just having the laws in place, it is no good just understanding the context. You really do have to get people to engage. That is what we try to do at Near Neighbours and sports clubs are really, really well placed to be able to get that engagement. It is easy to get the laws in place and to understand the context but engagement is really what needs to happen if we are to see change on the sort of level we want to see and that experience of that friend of mine being stopped.

Now let me just tell you a story from one project that we have funded about what change is possible. I won't tell you where it was but we had a group of dads and lads come together who were people from different faith communities. There were Muslims, Christians and people from the Jewish community. They came together because their lads were getting into trouble and it was becoming quite sectarian, with people using their religious background as a way of defining themselves in relation to other people around them. The group had a football tournament and they started to build some really quite good relationships. There was no talk about how do we live together; it was really about football bringing them together and helping them to engage with each in very personal ways. Then we funded a little trip to a sports park, whereby you can go and do training and you stay in residential dormitory type accommodation. They went off and did this training weekend and they did a

further training weekend and they were really getting into their tournament sport. Towards the end of the second weekend, one of the Muslim men came forward and said “I have had some things on my Facebook page that have been very negative about Jews, but I recognise that that was wrong and I have changed my mind and I just wanted to apologise and to let you know that I have taken them down”.

So it is possible for attitudes to be changed through the work you do and for some of this really very ugly stuff – which is not decreasing in our society, it is increasing – to be challenged and for people’s attitudes to be turned. The key thing to recognise is that the Home Office or the police could be responsible for this, actually it is the responsibility of *all of us*. We all have to look after each other. It is great that we have gathered together with some really good examples of positive change today. So thank you very much for all that you do and let’s do a lot more of this.

## Q and A

**Dr Julian Hargreaves (Woolf Institute):**

Sadia, I think you should be applauded for your work. I know Prestwich quite well and I know some of the historic tensions there between various groups so, your account of bringing people together was really terrific. Paul, as a researcher, I am very interested in national statistics and am part of a project looking at patterns of inclusion around the country. Do you collect national data and, if so, would you make that data available to researchers such as myself?

**Canon Hackwood:** We do and we will do.

**Helen Corrigan (Sport Birmingham):**

Sadia, did you find that there has been a wider impact with each of those women’s families, inter-generationally and the wider community?

**Sadia Akram:** Yes, definitely. If we give the ownership to the women they will tell you where they want to go and how they want to do it. Often, they want to involve their families and that is why one of the things that they wanted to do was to invite their families to events that they could go to together, such as a picnic or a dinner. So we have had one and we are looking to have another one. That has come from the women themselves and has not been forced on them by me. I guess that is part of a role of a facilitator, enabling them to build those relationships so they can get to that point themselves.

**Alan Sefton (Arsenal in the Community):**

Sadia, I am recruiting for you, I have got a niece that lives your area and I think she needs a bit of what you are offering! What type of exercise do you do?

**Sadia Akram:** We started with different sports – football, boxing, metafit, piloxing, rounders, badminton. I offered them some of each and then gave them the opportunity to say what they wanted. It was completely up to them, they could do belly dancing if they wanted. One of the things that is really important to the women is about them feeling safe and the group being just for women. For example, we make sure the cameras are turned off when they take their hijabs off. That brings them together. The onus is on them. The women choose and I organise it for them. We have done self-defence as well.

**Alan Sefton:** You have focussed on something very interesting that has been mentioned. That is that very often there are more similarities between the different faith groups than there are differences.

**Sadia Akram:** Exactly. I think if we let them come to that conclusion themselves through actions and experiences, then the result is stronger and will hopefully last forever.



**Bishop Atkinson:** Thank you Sadia, thank you Paul. Sadia, you have just reminded us of the excellent work that you're doing in the context of building relationship and trust. A low key inter faith engagement is often where things happen.

**Sadia Akram:** Yes. It is really important that soft dialogue happens. That then allows us to talk about the real stuff that divides us, which is where we want to be.

*Participants then attended workshops, notes of which are at the end of this report.*

# Brief feedback from workshops

**Bishop Atkinson:** Welcome back. I hope everyone has had a good lunch and a chance to talk and to share ideas and reflections. There will be a fuller note from each of the workshops as part of the report on this day but each group is now going to highlight 2 key points.

### **Workshop 1: Creating opportunities for engagement between single faith based bodies (Major Bryon Brotherton, Army Cricket Association)**

Sport is a powerful way to build up inter faith relations. Firstly, it is important to remember that some young people are from orthodox religious backgrounds so it's important to respect where everyone comes from and to involve everybody.

Secondly, it is not just up to sport clubs to take the lead. It is also up to the parents, the guardians, the gatekeepers, the schools themselves, the players, coaches, referees, as well as the youngster to form a supportive triangle that encourages and supports this type of engagement. It is about educating everybody, not only the youngsters that are growing and developing in a multi faith way and then moving forward. Also we must educate the parents and get them to understand what it is all about. It is also important to involve all faiths including Dharmic ones, such as Hindus and Sikhs and so forth.

### **Workshop 2: Working with sport and physical exercise as part of developing local inter faith initiatives (Sean Lofting, Surrey Football Association)**

Our first point is about innovation and bringing new ideas. The best example we had is the Lebanon Rugby Team in the Rugby League World Cup at the moment. Lebanon clearly is not known for its rugby at all. It has not really got the facilities or the right climate for it, but they are in the World Cup because in Sydney, Australia, there is a big Lebanese community. They all basically play and rugby has brought them together as a group. It has become so popular that it's spread and now there are people in Lebanon playing rugby because they have seen the team do so well. So it is about new ideas and not just running with them for the sake of it but in order, as well, to create a continuous succession plan.

Our second point is about trust. If, as a sport organisation, you're running an event, you need faith groups to trust you. To do that you need to show that you are not there just for the sake of a PR exercise to make yourselves look good; you need to invest in these people, you need to give them opportunities and take them further. They will put their trust in you if you do that.



**Workshop 3: Sport and inter faith engagement in a wider inclusion context (Arfan Akram, East London Cricket and Essex County Cricket Club)**

Our group actually shared some excellent practices and some great knowledge. The one point I would like to focus on is long term partnerships, not just partnerships. What we realised through a couple of good examples is that a lot of us may have the same agenda. For example, many people are focused on health and well-being. We are all tackling it individually whether it is sports organisations or local authorities. We shared some really good practice where many different types of bodies have got together and had a far bigger and wider impact jointly. Those projects have exceeded their 3 year life span. This might, in part, be because the partners can all tap into different funding.

**Bishop Atkinson:** Is there anything else from the workshops that anyone would like to add?

**Keith Ackerman (Leeds Cricket Project/Bridging Difference):** One of the points that came up in Workshop 1 was the importance of some form of facilitated dialogue added onto the sporting event, possibly later on or with a group of young people that run them, so that issues can be explored through dialogue once the sport has brought the people together.

**Bishop Atkinson:** Sport is a great catalyst for bringing people together but how we use that opportunity in a whole range of ways is important, not least through dialogue.

# Inter faith engagement – not bucking the tough issues

## Shaheen Bi, Head of Projects Sporting Equals

**Bishop Atkinson:** It is very good to welcome Shaheen Bi, Head of Projects at Sporting Equals, who will be talking about the 'Making Equals' project in the London Borough of Croydon which has input from a range of bodies including Croydon Faiths Together.

*A copy of the PowerPoint slides used for Ms Bi's presentation is at the end of this note.*

**Shaheen Bi:** Sporting Equals before is a national charity working to build healthier, fairer and stronger communities. [Slide 2] We have got a national remit but we also work in different regions and have a local presence. We have a network of about 5,000 organisations and we work both with the public and private sector, offering a range of services from research through to one on one consultancy.

The model today I am going to be talking about is one of using sport as a catalyst for social change. [Slide 3] It is called Making Equals and we delivered the project in Bradford, Burnley and, this year, in Croydon. It is a project aimed at bridging the gap between communities. It has a focus on changing perceptions, attitudes and behaviours to lead to greater integration through people from different faith communities coming together and interacting in a mutual space. There is a lot of best practice and learning that has come out of this project. I will touch on some of the key points, but we will have an end of

project report evaluation coming out very shortly.

The model itself was a multi-agency approach. [Slide 4] There were a number of partners involved in the project which included the local authority, inter faith bodies, voluntary bodies, and sports clubs.

The key approach was offering sports and different activities from cricket through to switch sports through to tennis.

Masterclasses and workshops were delivered by role models, either through communities or through Ambassadors for Sporting Equals. Christine Ohuruogu was one of those who supported the young people in a run round the athletics track, for example. The objective was to focus on young people from different faith backgrounds, particularly in Croydon which has had a high prevalence of community tension.

We recruited young people between the age of 16-25 from different tension hotspots within Croydon, bringing them together in a mutual space. The objective was to support dialogue and talk about different topics that are quite sensitive, such as Islamophobia, bullying and harassment. The approach used was 'a check and challenge' approach to work with young people on their views, break down some of the prejudices and stereotypes that they might be holding and connecting people from different backgrounds who would probably

otherwise not integrate, in particular outside a school environment. It was about trying to build a culture of respect and relate. Young people can relate to each other through breaking down barriers, through the workshops, through the masterclasses and then using sport as a fun, interactive way to empower and engage them in activities which can bring them together in a mutual space.

This is just some of the research that has come out of the project in terms of the impact that the project made. [Slide 5] 80% of participants stated that the project had improved their ability to relate to people from different backgrounds and 80% stated they could make a positive difference to their area locally. 64% said it had improved their understanding of the importance of being healthy.

We used a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research. We did a pre-workshop survey and a post-event survey. We also did a 2-month follow on survey to look at how attitudes and behaviours had changed and to look at the knock on effect once people had gone away from the workshops and masterclasses and gone out and done things in their own life relating to their ambitions and goals. We found that there was a lot of positive attitude as a result of this sort of training and that it had helped break down the barriers in terms of perceptions and attitudes towards people from different backgrounds.

This is just some of the participant feedback that we got in terms of the end of evaluation research. [Slide 6] The critical success factors were that it provided a mutual space to build trust and there was a lot of learning about and interacting with people from different backgrounds. People were learning about different sorts of cultures and, as a result, they understood more about the sensitivities, issues and fears that other people were facing that

they were probably not aware of previously. The key point of this project is that it was changing behaviour, perceptions and attitudes.

In terms of the long term sustainability, [Slide 7] we had a multi-agency approach to help support young people to look at some of the local issues that affected them. We got a few of the agencies working together, for example Croydon Voluntary Action, London Sport and the local authority helped to support a steering group that supported enabling young people to drive change in their local area around issues that are important to them.

So it is not just about parachuting in, delivering training and leaving, it is about long term change, getting young people from within the community to start interacting and engaging on a platform and using that as a lever to drive local change. The project enabled young people who have felt quite disengaged and left out, to have a voice. When we did the initial research before the project started, one of the biggest results that came out is that young people from different backgrounds felt that they were not being given a voice and not being heard. This has given them an avenue to voice their concerns about the important issues affecting them locally that they would like to change.

Sport was a lever to bring fun and enjoyment into the project but it was about the wider cohesion issues and the wider social integration. As I said, we hope we can scale up the model. The research findings will be launched very shortly. This is a positive example of how a small project involving about 40-50 young people has made a difference to their lives in terms of their ambitions and their goals and what they can do to enable change in their local area.

## Q and A

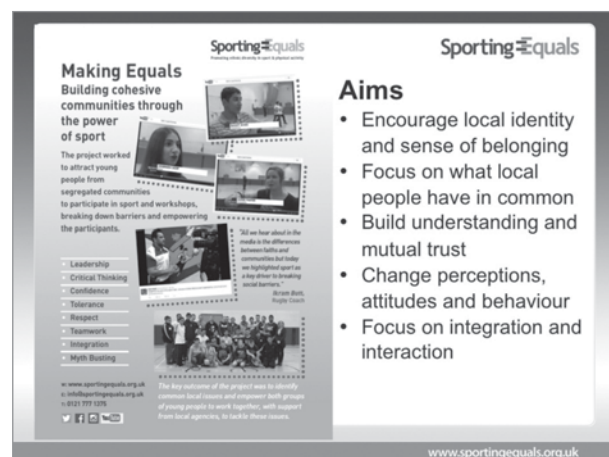
**Samir Singh (Arsenal in the Community):** Was there any difference between working in Burnley and Oldham and working in Croydon?



**Shaheen Bi:** Yes, there are different tensions in different areas. We did the project in Bradford in 2014 and the scene was different to now. There are a lot of social problems and tensions as a result of a number of issues, such as the EU Referendum result, hate crimes and other crimes. There are different tensions in different cities based on what's been happening there locally. Essentially though it is about getting dialogue going between young people and building trust. The media tends to push all the negatives around different faith communities, so there are no positives there and this can lead to challenging issues. We had a lot of positive role models, like Moses Adeyemi. There were some difficult and sensitive issues that we had to tackle through the project, for example around language, using certain words and why young people should not be using them. There are going to be different challenges with different young people depending on their conflicts as well.

**Q:** I saw a very interesting quote in your presentation that people mixed in school but that the mixing in the project was different. Have I got that right? I have done some projects in schools and some not and some of the young people have said exactly the same. Maybe that is about the kind of dialogue and that they coexist at school but these projects give them the opportunities to challenge issues. I don't know if that is what you meant, but that is what certainly came up in my projects.

**Shaheen Bi:** Yes. Kids have to interact in school because of the educational environment but I think outside of school there are very limited opportunities and


people tend to lead quite parallel lives. There are not any opportunities for them to get together. There needs to be a safe space for young people to air their concerns and get some of their views challenged and break down some of those stereotypes. There is a lot of work that sports establishments can do to develop that integration whether it is around sport or around a wider social agenda.



Making  **Sporting  Equals**

### Model Background

- Partnership approach
- Key Activities:
  - Sports activities
  - Masterclasses (including Inter Faith)
  - Workshops
- Informal sporting activities work as an 'ice breaker' and offer social interaction
- Comfortable safe place for dialogue on sensitive issues such as islamophobia, bullying and harassment





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**Sporting  Equals**

# Making Equals


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 @SportingEquals

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Making  **Sporting  Equals**

### IMPACT (Data from our community cohesion project delivered in Croydon July 2017)

- Limiting perceptions measurably improved (**80% of participants stated they had improved their ability to relate to people from different backgrounds**)
- Social cohesion measurably improved (**80% of participants felt their ability to make a positive difference in their local area had improved**)
- Wellbeing of young people measurably improved (**64% of participants stated that their views on the importance of being healthy had positively changed**)



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### Participant feedback

*'I think there is a level of integration but when you come away from schools...I don't think there is much integration, I think people stay within their own cultures'*

*'I now have positive views about 'Muslims' and people of different faiths, the workshop gave us a broader understanding of different cultures'*

*'I've found a respect for others and a new appreciation for people of all walks of life'*

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Making  **Sporting  Equals**

### LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY

- Steering Group supported by local agencies
- Pathways into training and volunteering opportunities
- Greater engagement with sports activities and providers
- Locally driven voice for young people from different faith backgrounds

*'It made me feel that our voices are 'heard', it just helps you not to give up!'*



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# Keeping the positive in view – the power of inter faith teams to model and encourage harmony and cohesion

Arfan Akram, East London Cricket Co-Ordinator

Cllr Mukesh Patel, Tour Captain and team member

**Bishop Atkinson:** Now we move to the world of cricket. You may have seen the media coverage earlier this Autumn of the cricket match between a multi faith team from East London and the Vatican XI. It is good to welcome Arfan Akram, the East London Cricket Co-Ordinator and tour captain, and Cllr Mukesh Patel, both members of the East London multi faith team organised by Essex County Cricket Club. They will be speaking to us about their experience and what they learned from it and the benefits of it.

*A copy of the PowerPoint slides used in their presentation is at the end of this note.*

**Cllr Mukesh Patel:** We would like to begin by introducing ourselves. As you can see, this slide [Slide 2] tells you a little bit about me. The tour was an excellent experience, bringing people from many faiths together in one team and using cricket to get the message across to people that we can unite as a community.

**Arfan Akram:** I am very fortunate in that my role enables me to work with both the commercial and the community team. [Slide 3] It is a mixed role which enables a lot of these projects to happen. This ‘heat map’ [Slide 4] was created by the England

and Wales Cricket Board (ECB). The dark red areas show where the population of South Asians is over 40%. There are 42,000 people playing cricket in Essex alone and half of them play in East London, of which 90% are South Asian. The Mayor of London said: “East London is the most diverse part of London with over 220 languages spoken and London is the most diverse city in the world”. [Slide 5]

Half of our First Team reside in or play cricket from East London, nearly 70% of our performance squad, (under 11s to over 18s) are from East London and we have just over 290 teams that play cricket out of East London. We have a number of projects in the area, including programmes for women and girls, tape ball cricket, car park cricket and over 50’s cricket.

Across the last 12 months we have worked with faith communities in a variety of ways. During the month of Ramadan we involved the Muslim community in cricket in the 3 hour gap between the Evening prayer and Morning Prayer. This mean opening up halls and leisure centres past midnight which was interesting. We also do lots of work with Ilford Islamic Centre. There is a lot about that in the media so I won’t go into details now.



We hold an annual East London Junior Multi Faith Festival in June, which has been going for 5 years. We have nearly 300 kids from multiple different faiths playing cricket. As it was mentioned earlier today, I will touch more on the aspect of our work around good practice and learning in stadia. England Women played Pakistan Women this year. They were some debates in our commercial team but we made one half of our stadium an alcohol free zone, so we shut all the bars. The commercial team, however, soon realised that more revenue is made on soft drinks than alcohol so in the end it also made commercial sense. Obviously the downside was that the health and wellbeing team were concerned about the sugar content in soft drinks! We also split our indoor centre into two sections to create male and female prayer areas. We are short of female coaches so Barking Mosque is going to host our female only coaching courses to ensure we have diverse female coaching.

The journey of the Vatican game started last year when the English Cricket Board (ECB) contacted us saying that the Vatican team was coming to the UK on a 10 day tour and asking whether we would like to host them. [Slide 7] We agreed and suggested that rather than just a game of cricket we could turn it into a celebration of cricket in East London. We had 5 faiths represented, and people from 6 different countries from community leaders to councillors and people who deliver cricket on the ground. We were very, very fortunate that two England and Essex legends, Graham Gooch and the late Doug Insole, also supported us on the day which gave us good publicity.

As you will see, [Slide 8] I have called the Tourists Team the 'perfect storm'. This is because we had an exceptional involvement of people, including the independent director of the ECB Board, probably the single most powerful man on the ECB, the Head of Sport from the Mayor

of London's office, local authority representatives, community leaders and inspirational people on the ground who delivered our sessions. Not only did we play a couple of games of cricket and attend seminars, but we also had three and a half days of these people mixing and interacting and sharing good practices and future planning.

We were blown away by the interest and support that we received. This slide [Slide 9] shows just a few of the messages that we received: from the Prime Minister, the Mayor of London, Lord Patel of Bradford and Father O'Higgins. The Prime Minister said how good it was that a shared love for cricket was bringing people of all faiths together in East London; and the Mayor of London said that this was showcasing London as a beacon of diversity through a cricket team that was representative of different faiths. We were very encouraged by these messages.

*A video was then shown about the trip to the Vatican City. The video can be seen at <http://www.essex.ukcricket.tv/essex-multi-faith-xi-heads-to-the-vatican-city/>.*

I hope that film gives you a flavour of the trip. Sadly, we didn't get to meet the Pope because of clashes in his schedule. [Slide 11] However, we received a lovely message from him wishing us good health, sending his prayers and asking us to pray for him. I thought that was a lovely touch, even though the Vatican XI beat us!

In terms of the impact of the trip, as Arun Kang mentioned earlier, commonality was a key factor. [Slide 12] The impact lay in the fact that it was a group that shared so many values in common and saw the power of what we all believe in. We have had quite a lot of follow up meetings and projects, mainly offers to support the cricket programmes, others around health agendas and also the local authority. The local authorities have involved us in their

future policies and have been very supportive and we are trying to work closely with them. Obviously we have also been invited to today's event! We have been on TV channels, such as the Islam Channel. We are also going into schools next week, where they have asked us to be part of a panel discussion which should be exciting. I think I should stop there and allow time for questions. Thank you.

## Q and A

### **Tony Bowry (Leeds Cricket Project):**

Congratulations on this project. We also had a programme in Leeds in 2005, supported by the ECB, where we went to the Vatican and they came over last year and had some games. I hope it develops further and continues to bring communities together. Well done.

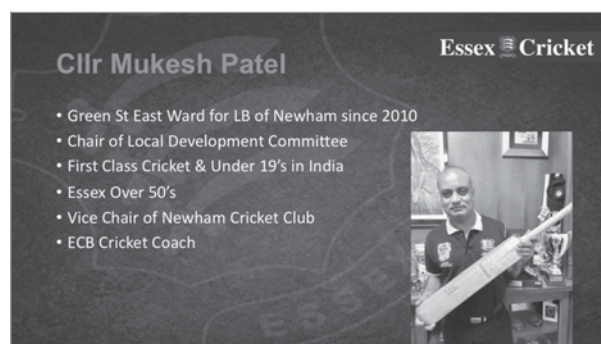
**Professor John Williams (University of Leicester Unit for Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement):** What is the outcome? What do you aim to achieve?

**Arfan Akram:** The statistics around East London look pretty scary: it is the place where there is the highest number of arrests linked to terrorism, in the Borough of Newham to be precise. On the trip we used those 3 days for a lot of dialogue around projects which can have major impacts. You don't often get the opportunity to have that level or calibre of people in one room, so that was an objective in itself. We are also following up leads which have come from the trip and trying to support as many different projects which are relevant to everybody's outcomes and objectives.

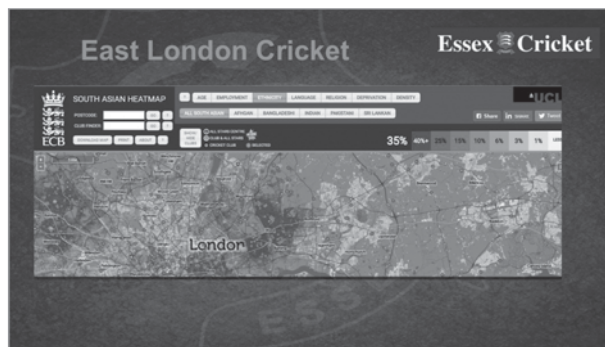
**Professor John Williams:** What about the Catholics?

**Arfan Akram:** Hugely influential. We are starting to deliver a lot of cricket at Catholic schools and talking to the schools

on the back of this. In rural Essex we do a lot of work around the churches but actually in East London we don't. One of the presentations earlier today about integration was really interesting. We have been working with connecting communities and through that we have now had three schools in Waltham Forest come forward. One of these, at which we are going to take part in a panel discussion, is a Catholic school. The Vatican cricket team themselves are going to come over this summer and they are hopefully going to get involved with one of those projects in schools, which will hopefully then have a secondary impact.







### Messages of support

Essex Cricket

**“I AM HEARTENED THAT A SHARED LOVE FOR CRICKET IS BRINGING PEOPLE OF ALL FAITHS TOGETHER IN EAST LONDON. I HOPE ESSEX CRICKET ENJOYS THE TRIP TO THE VATICAN. I WISH EVERYONE INVOLVED THE VERY BEST OF LUCK.”**

PRIME MINISTER THERESA MAY

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan said:  
“In London, we respect, embrace and celebrate our diversity. What better way to showcase London as a beacon of diversity than through a cricket team that is representative of five different faiths. I hope the trip is a great success and that we can host the Vatican Cricket team in London in the not too distant future.”

Fr. Eamon O'Higgins, L.C. (St. Peter's Cricket Team Manager) said:  
“The Inter Faith tour will bring people of major religious faiths together in Rome. In this way, we will explore together the belief that there is an order and purpose to all things, and that the way of human life is to seek and to experience the Real Source of all that is noble, true and good. This is a faith religion is the human response to the source of all things, and the discovery that we are sons and daughters, and therefore all brothers and sisters. The world today needs to see this authentic religious experience.”

### Key Facts about Cricket in East London

Essex Cricket

- 42,000 people play cricket in Essex
- A little under 22,000 play cricket in East London
- Approx. 90% of cricket participants in East London are from a South Asian Background
- “East London is the most diverse part of London with over 220 languages spoken and London is the most diverse city in the world”
- 50% off Essex 1st team squad are from East London
  - Ravi Bopara, James Foster, Nick Browne, Kishen Velani, Jamie Porter, Dan Lawrence, Aron Nijjar, Varun Chopra, Feroze Khushi...
  - Around 65% off Essex Performance Squad are from East London
  - 7 South Asian Leagues (Approx. 250+ teams) + 2 Traditional Leagues with teams in East London
- A number of Women and Girls Programmes
- Huge number of informal cricket (such as Tape Ball Cricket, Car Park Cricket, Over 50's Cricket...)

### Essex Multi Faith Tour to the Vatican

Essex Cricket

### Work amongst Faith Communities

Essex Cricket

- Ramadan Cricket
- Ilford Islamic Mosque
- Annual East London Junior Faith Festival
  - Outdoor and Indoor
- England v Pakistan Women's T20
- Female only coaching courses

### Message from Pope Francis

Essex Cricket

... Delighted to know about our event and meeting and encouraged us in our work. He sends his prayers and asked for ours...

### Background to the Tour

Essex Cricket

- Hosted the Vatican Cricket Team, St. Peters CC at Walthamstow CC in September 2016
- Essex Team:
  - 5 faiths represented
  - 6 countries represented
  - Community Leaders
  - Councillors
  - Cricket Delivery
- Essex Legends Supported

### Impact from the Trip

Essex Cricket

- “Commonality” – The Power of Inter-Faith
- A number of follow-up meetings from the group on:
  - Supporting Cricket Programmes
  - Strong communication and support for programmes
  - Local Authority “leading” on projects
- Invitation to Sporting Equals & Inter Faith Conference
- Invitation to Islam Channel
- Visits to a number of schools to share the trip and take part in panel discussions

### The Tourists – “The Perfect Storm”

Essex Cricket

- England & Wales Cricket Board
  - Professor Lord Patel of Bradford OBE
- Mayor of London's Office
  - Simon Cooper – Head of Sports
- Local Authority
  - Cllr Forhad Hussain – Cabinet Member at LB of Newham (Sport, Leisure, Crime & Pensions) & Essex CCB Director
  - Cllr Kam Rai – Deputy Leader at LB of Redbridge
  - Cllr Dominic Twomey – Deputy Leader LB of Barking & Dagenham
  - Cllr Mubashir Patel – LB of Newham
  - Cllr Kunal Haroon – LB of Barking & Dagenham
- Community Leaders
  - Shiraz Kothia
  - Emdad Rahman MBE
  - Reza Ali – London Tigers and Essex CCB Director
- Inspirational Cricket Community
  - Saba Nasim BEM – ECB Coach of the Year 2016
  - Kanan Thuyarajah – Lead Coach – Delivering coaching within a Mosque
  - Anwar Rumar and Sheila Sethi – Cavaliers Cricket Academy
  - Michael Arnold – Essex Ability Coach in East London
  - Vince Mulholland – Ilford Catholics CC Chairman

### Questions

# Plenary discussion

**Bishop Atkinson:** We have had a very full and interesting day which has covered a range of projects from the top level of sport down to the grassroots. This is our chance now to share reflections and comments together in plenary. On the programme for the day there are some questions that might guide us:

- a) How do sport and inter faith initiatives contribute to cohesion and integration in local communities? How might that be strengthened?
- b) How might we increase the opportunities for people of different faiths and beliefs to come to develop bonds of understanding and friendship through sport?
- c) Are there additional ways that faith communities, sports bodies, schools, local authorities and other agencies might encourage and support this kind of activity?
- d) How might inter faith initiatives building a sports dimension into their programmes?

I suggest that we just turn to our neighbours again and have 2 or 3 minutes of conversation. Perhaps everyone can come came up with one comment or one question to feed into our plenary discussion.

*There then followed a break for discussion.*

**Bishop Atkinson:** So, who would like to begin?

**Rehan Haidar (Department for Communities and Local Government<sup>2</sup>):**

I have just had a very interesting conversation about using places of worship for sport, where they have a hall or a floor available that perhaps could be used by the local community. It is about taking the opportunity to invite others from different backgrounds to come along. It doesn't necessarily require a large investment – it could be cheap and cheerful, for example soft football, soft cricket, badminton, or table tennis. There are lots of possibilities. The same approach would apply to local councils where there are perhaps derelict buildings or unused premises. Could those types of building be useful?

**Bishop Atkinson:** My last inter faith sporting activity was archery in the Hindu temple in Luton, which was good.

**Narendra Waghela (Leicester Council of Faiths):** I belong to a BAPS organisation, the Swaminarayan Temple. The Neasden Temple has an indoor connected sports hall and we have copied that in Leicester. It is amazing what it has done for the whole organisation and its local relationships. The kids come in to play, but at the end of the day they understand the culture as well. So I would say yes, places of worship premises can be used. The South Asian community has a tendency to believe in academic education rather than sports education. They often bring up their children wishing them, for example, to be doctors and dentists but don't want them to be mechanics or even sports people. That trend has to change; parents need to understand and promote what we are

<sup>2</sup> Now the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government

talking about otherwise we will just be meeting and talking about it and the parents will not get involved at all.

**Unnamed speaker:** It is just a very brief to say thank you very much to Near Neighbours because they funded a couple of the projects I am involved in, without their funding we would not be able to do it.

**Trip Pannu (Windsor and Maidenhead Community Forum):** In regard to the academic leaning that we have in the Asian community, we found that you need inspiration. There is a man from Ilford, called Fauja Singh, who took up marathon running when he was 85. This has had a great effect in the area and in the Sikh community where some of the people are now doing marathon running and taking up fitness. You need people to inspire you. I think in all our communities there are people to inspire, we just have to tap into this.

**Cllr Manjula Sood (Leicester Council of Faiths):** It has been a very thought-provoking day today about sport and inter faith work. As you mentioned, in many places of worship, sport is not even on the agenda or, if it is, it is at the bottom. However, I think that women are very keen to take control of their physical activity. They feel more comfortable when they are using local swimming baths or walking groups so that they can get together and having physical activities. Even badminton and lawn tennis are becoming quite popular among women because they are empowering themselves. There was some funding given by Leicester Ageing Together and through this some street audits were undertaken where they went around the streets where people were not taking part. We have to start by forming these sort of groups to take them forward in different sorts of activities. We also have to educate parents. In schools where opportunities are provided, the parents should allow children to take part. It is everyone's

responsibility, whatever role they play, to ensure that sport is important, otherwise we won't have an active nation.

**Bishop Atkinson:** Thank you. Building on what's there at the grassroots level.

**Obayed Hussain (Birmingham FA):** I've just recently returned from a trip to Denver, Colorado in the USA for a similar inter faith event. Quite a few of the questions that were raised were around people of no faith with people asking where they were in the discussion. They feel a bit marginalised. They asked "Why are there bursaries and courses for this community and that community but not for people of no faith?" We can't forget people of no faith. We can't have them turn and say, "Religion and faith people are the cause of issues and that's why they're being supported". We need to engage with people of no faith, not just the faith element.

**Bishop Atkinson:** Thank you. I take seriously what you said. However, for a moment, just going back to the faith dimension, is there more to be said about how we enable people of all ages to engage at the faith level and to grow in their understanding of faith?

**David Hampshire (Inter Faith Network office):** Sadia Akram has had to leave to go to another event. As you know, she mentioned in her presentation that one of the things that they started in the women's sport project in Manchester, was not only developing friendships but getting women from different faith traditions to actually share those faith traditions with each other, for example, recognising when people's different festivals are. When we had originally been discussing her coming to participate in today's event she had said to me that there were two different aspects to the development of those friendships. One is that you grow within your own faith tradition when you have to explain your faith tradition to someone else, because



you have to think about it in a way that you probably never had to think about it before and to communicate that to another who is different to yourself. The other is how learning about somebody else's faith can help you to clarify where you stand and is also a way of challenging the prejudices that you may have had because of the kind of misinformation or disinformation which can move around among communities. That itself was something which was growing. She did say that you have to start with the soft dialogue before building through to the more difficult, and sometimes more controversial, issues. That faith journey itself can also be enhanced by the sporting experience. I think the work they have been doing with CCJ, Near Neighbours and FODIP has borne that out.

**Cllr Manjula Sood (Leicester Council of Faiths):** On Saturday in Leicester we are going to have an inter faith walk between different places of worship. Such events could also promote sport.

**Bishop Atkinson:** The traditions of inter faith walks and peace walks are often a good place to start. Is there anybody here who hasn't been one of the speakers today who has a project or an event they're involved in that they'd like to tell us about briefly?

**Sean Lofting (Surrey Football Association):** We are running an Inter Faith Week football tournament this Saturday. Crystal Palace FC and its Foundation is supporting the event. There is also support from Kick It Out which works around anti-discrimination within football. The idea of the event is that people from the age of 14 to 23, split into two age groups, will come for a fun day of football. It's not about winning, it's not about competition. They'll start off playing with their own team that they've come with and then we'll then mix the teams. We have teams coming from different faiths. Kingston University's Hindu

society and a few clubs from around the local Croydon area are coming with players from a variety of faiths. We are just using football to bring them together for a one day event.

**Narendra Waghela (Leicester Council of Faiths):** We will be sharing food this evening at our local inter faith group meeting at the Sacred Heart church in Leicester tonight. Everyone will bring home cooked food. Sharing food is a good way to come together.

**Helen Corrigan (Sport Birmingham):** We work with a number of national governing bodies of sport. British Fencing did a project in Birmingham last year. It was also run in London so they were trying to scale it up somewhere else in the country. That was alongside a group called Maslaha Women's Group. The aim of the project was to break down misconceptions and stereotypes around faith, and particularly Muslim girls, taking part in sport. We got together a couple of schools in one of the hotspot areas in Birmingham and they did fencing together. It was a really good level playing field because no one had done fencing before. It was great because the girls were all covered up and you couldn't tell who was behind each mask. That contributed to it being a level playing field. After they'd done the activity the girls all sat round in a circle and brought out some discussion points around what their perceptions were of each other, stereotypes and so on, which led to conversations and understanding around the different faiths and barriers to sport.

**Katie Young (De Montfort University):** A question to those that are more experienced at organising inter faith sports activities: Are there any sports that people have tried that really haven't worked?

**Wasim Riaz (Association of Muslim Schools Inter Faith Games programme):** Table tennis didn't work well as the

schools said it would be good but the pupils weren't interested. We've also had difficulty with cricket as we can't find a format that suits one-day and involves lots of schools.

**Bishop Atkinson:** I expect there are people in the room who might be able to give advice on that!

Thank you to everyone who offered contributions during that session.

# Panel

**Bishop Atkinson:** We are now going to invite a panel of three people to share their reflections on our day together.

**Associate Professor John Williams,**  
Co-Director, University of  
Leicester Unit for Diversity,  
Inclusion and Community  
Engagement (DICE)

**Professor John Williams:** We people who work and research in the field of sport are often tempted to lean on Nelson Mandela's famous quotation about how 'Sport can change the world.' I have heard it used a couple of times today. But I think it is a mistake to do so: sport can't change the world – or even South Africa. It can, however, do its bit; it can help change people's experiences and attitudes in the way few other cultural resources can. It also can aid our knowledge and understanding of different communities and faiths. Sport can do a lot.

But sport (like faith itself) can also divide as easily as it unites. And we should be wary of arguing that sport can somehow 'solve' what are really major economic, social and cultural problems of the sort that only governments and domestic and global policy agencies can really address effectively. Let's not pretend that sport is (or can be) a panacea for all social ills. Sport is for pleasure as well as policy.

Sport can, however, as I said, do its bit. It can do good and important things. I was at a 50th anniversary celebration of the Race Equality Council in Leicester recently. The Bishop of Leicester gave a talk about the capacity of different faiths to work together. A senior figure from a local gurdwara in Leicester said that he

disagreed with that because after spending a lifetime working in a particular faith community, he doubted whether faith could actually bring people together. He thought that it continued to divide. I said that the only occasion I could think of in my entire lifetime in Leicester of 40 years when people from different backgrounds and communities and faiths came together and nobody 'owned' the event was when Leicester City won the Premier League title in 2016 and 250,000 gathered to celebrate on Victoria Park. Nobody looked at each other and said: 'Which community are you from? Why are you here? Whose events are we celebrating?' It was an event of the City of Leicester, not a celebration of a particular faith tradition, nor a celebration of a particular community event. It was a sense that everybody felt they had a particular sense of ownership and involvement. There is the power of sport to have an impact on people's lives. And, in a way to help us forget our faith backgrounds, to show those commonalities that bring us together and unite us.

I must say that it has been inspiring to hear so many people talk about their remarkable projects with such enthusiasm – lots of great work is going on. But we must not let these accounts drift away, become disconnected and possibly dissolve for lack of recognition and support. We need to build on what we have heard today. We need to seek out resources to establish an enabling network for those who are working so well in the inter faith and sport arena. In short, this event cannot be allowed to stimulate our interest and then move on. Sustainability must be our byword.

We need regular meetings and forums to discuss financial and other resource support for a network and perhaps to provide a 'good guide' for others to learn from. We could start from a small base, but the growth of the Healthy Stadia project across Europe may be a useful guide in this respect. <http://healthystadia.eu/>

We need to hear more *women's* voices in these presentations and discussions. Women and girls are deeply involved in sport these days and this event has not really reflected that situation. So we must seek out, support and promote much more work involving women in sport across faith communities. The one account we did hear about a women's project in the Manchester area offered us a great lesson: that we must *listen* to and if possible *record* what people say about their inter faith sporting experiences; about what works for them and what we might try in the future. Our clients are also our partners.

Which leads me to say that we also need generally to collect more information and to carefully *evaluate* why some projects work and what slows others down. Place differences are important here, of course, but we can also learn very useful lessons from each other. Providing reliable evidence will also aid the possibility for future sustainable funding.

We must fully recognise and use the power of the *brand* in sport: professional sports clubs offer incredible leverage, especially with young people, so it is a priority to build connections where we can and where these will be useful, and to try to use such links to increase the range and influence of the projects we are trying to support. Arsenal, Burnley and Everton are examples of professional clubs which are often involved in these type of events, but there are many more which aren't. I support Liverpool FC and recently three

Muslim players prayed on the pitch before a match. It would be great if Liverpool spent a few minutes with its players discussing what their faith means to them and putting something about this on the club website. That could have so much impact in terms of spreading understanding about faith, particularly the Muslim faith.

Finally, and perhaps most controversially, we have spent much of today talking about using sport to promote cohesion across faith communities, particularly among young people, because we know that they can lead largely 'segregated' lives. We know this happens residentially because people can want to live with 'their own' and because of local and national policies in this respect. We know, too, our children are often educated separately, sometimes along faith lines. This is surely a barrier to extending knowledge, familiarity and understanding of different faiths and cultures – and sport cannot easily compensate for this early separation.

### Rehan Haidar, Senior Policy Officer, Department for Communities and Local Government<sup>3</sup>

**Rehan Haidar:** A whole range of issues have arisen in the course of today discussion. To begin we had Bishop Richard Atkinson talking about breaking down barriers and the real challenges which we face. That is a sentiment that was echoed by Canon Paul Hackwood when he talked about the work that Near Neighbours is doing across the country. Arun Kang mentioned in his presentation the importance of developing inter faith connections once you have created them and ensuring that events are not just one-offs. You have to have open dialogue and focus on commonalities.

<sup>3</sup> Now the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government



Tim Mathias talked about something that is of great interest to me personally, and also in the context of the work that I'm doing on integration, and that was about mixing with people of different backgrounds at least once per week. In the context of the rugby project he is involved in he said that 29% of respondents said they had met people they wouldn't normally meet with, so that kind of engagement is very important. That was a sentiment that was in Matt Parish's presentation as well. This was about mixing up teams. There might be a situation where initially children are in groups from local mosques or faith schools and once they get to know their Christian counterparts a situation can develop where they mix and at the end of the day it's not the 'imams vs vicars' model but rather mixed teams with personal connectivity taking place.

In Sadia Akram's presentation she noted that the main purpose of using the Maccabi Centre was to ensure involvement from orthodox Jewish women. She also emphasised that the main focus was not the faith element but rather wellbeing and the physical benefits of the sports on offer.

So a whole range of issues have arisen for me today.

I would also like to say something about the Government's integration approach. *Creating Conditions for Integration* is a document that was published in 2012. Since then, as I'm sure most of you are aware, Dame Louise Casey was commissioned by the then Prime Minister to do a review of opportunity and integration across the country. Her report was published in December 2016. It was very comprehensive and touched on a range of themes. The main themes that emerged from her review included a range of social issues, such as a lack of social mixing which undermines integration; and structural issues, such as lack of English

language proficiency, residential segregation, educational segregation and unemployment.

Dame Louise Casey's review noted that 85% of people report belonging strongly to Britain and 81% say their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well. However, she made it clear that we do have tensions, in particular in deprived communities, especially where there are ethnic minority groups and poorer white communities.

In relation to the integration strategy which I touched on earlier, the Conservative Manifesto committed the Government to help people in more isolated communities to engage with the wider world, to help them in particular into the workplace and also to teach people to speak English.

What we as a Department have been doing since Dame Louise reported last year, is reviewing the available evidence of the main causes of poor integration. In the coming months we shall be announcing plans for tackling these issues through a new Integration Strategy. My personal interest relates to this idea of social mixing and what I'm really talking about is *meaningful* social mixing, as opposed to casual exchanges which you have daily – ie getting people together for a particular purpose, such as a social event, a civic event, a social action event, through workplaces or via schools.

I will leave it there for now but hopefully that's a useful introduction to our Department's interest in this very important agenda.

## Dr Harriet Crabtree, Executive Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK

**Dr Crabtree:** I have been reminded today of a sign my old boss used to have above his desk. It was a picture of a puzzled looking person and it said “It's all very simple, or else it's all very complex, or perhaps it's neither, or both”. Firstly, simplicity. Sport liberates people to engage and be in the moment. There is a simplicity to that – as there is the fact that when you're in the moment, you're open and forget your differences and also transcend the things that may keep you within your usual social boundaries. That is a simple and powerful reality. However, secondly, beyond the moment, complexity re-enters. Sport takes place within an environment that is affected by a multitude of factors. As Professor Williams said: it is misleading to think that sport alone is the answer to everything. That includes good inter faith relations. There also has to be attention to context, purpose and support.

The complex aspect has come through quite a lot today as well. For example, thinking about whether to have single faith or mixed faith teams, or considering whether inter faith clergy matches are a positive model. Let's focus on this for a moment. Actually there is a very big symbolic power to clergy of different faiths playing – even if on separate teams. It sends a message about friendly engagement, united in common love of sport. But it can have the difficult corollary that it can be perceived as perpetuating people being on different ‘sides’ – perhaps in life more widely as well as on the pitch. So everything has its complexity in a way. Also complex is taking into account all the different constituencies that are relevant, particularly with youth sport activity – teachers, parents, governors, young people, older people, clubs and people with particular roles within those clubs

such as referees, coaches, players and so forth.

But I'd like to bring us back to the seemingly simple for a moment. When I came back to live in this country in 1990 after 10 years studying and teaching in the States I was amazed at how my country had changed. I had grown up in a mainly mono-cultural part of Yorkshire and later Sussex and when I came back I realised how diverse the country had become. I was living in London and it was a different world. Somewhat unexpectedly I went to work for the Inter Faith Network. I rapidly came to the view that this was one of the most important things that I could do with my life – I imagine most of us have had moments in our lives when we have realised that something is of great significance for society. In this room are many who have realised the significance of sport in the lives of individuals and society. Today inter faith relations and sport dovetail in our meeting and they have a powerful interconnection that can bring change for good. That matters greatly.

In that connection, ahead of Bishop Richard's formal thanks, I would like to note the work in this area of a former colleague of mine, Paresh Solanki (who is here today), and IFN's current Assistant Director, David Hampshire, as well as the fantastic team at Sporting Equals led by Arun Kang.

On a practical point, coming out of today I wonder whether there is a place for looking at resources that can help people in different contexts enabling and promoting sport that encourages inter faith encounter and learning. Also, I echo Professor Williams' point about the importance of linking up what is happening at local level. It is good in its own right but its power can be multiplied through sharing of good practice on a regular basis. Supportive engagement from Government, as well as other

agencies, is important and it has been good to hear the input today of Rehan Haider from DCLG about integration and the significance within that of mixing.

Sport and physical activity have the power to liberate from prejudice and boundaries and create positive relationships – when the context and the support is right. Simple, complex, neither, both – regardless of how we see it, we all have a role to play in helping create that context, the opportunities and the relationships that flow from positive experiences of playing and exercising with people of different backgrounds.

# Closing reflections from the Chair

The Rt Revd Richard Atkinson, Co-Chair,  
Inter Faith Network for the UK

**Bishop Atkinson:** We have had some really helpful reflections. Where am I left at the end of today? I'm encouraged. I'm challenged. There has been a broader understanding of the richness of what is happening. There is something here about the challenge to all of us, Firstly, we need to go wider, as part of integrating, reaching beyond where we are into new communities and in new ways. , Secondly, there is a sense of a need to reach deeper and to consider how we engage with people as individuals and with their faith communities, tackling those harder and sometimes more difficult questions. Thirdly, there is a sense of wanting to go higher, holding up the aspirations.

I've been pondering Professor Williams' comments about 250,000 people gathered in Victoria Park and the suggestion that we need to forget faith for a while. As you might expect, as a Church of England bishop I'm not quite sure I would agree!

Mountain top experiences, as Leicester City have found, only last for a period, and then you're fighting for your life again towards the bottom of the League! To me that is where the resources of faith come into the picture. One of the good things about the partnership with sport and the values of sport at its best is that it draws out from faith, religion and belief some of their best aspects. That is reflected in the really creative partnership that we have celebrated today.

Thank you to you all for being here, including to the small number who have had to leave early due to other commitments, and for making it such a good day. Thank you to those who had roles as presenters, facilitators, notetakers and rapporteurs. Thank you everybody for your contributions.

A very big thanks to Leicester Tigers and all the staff here for welcoming us so well. Finally, this wouldn't have happened without hard work on behalf of both the Inter Faith Network and Sporting Equals, so thank you to all the staff who have been involved. From IFN's point of view, thank you again to Sporting Equals for your partnership in this event.

There will be a full record which will allow us to revisit the day and we hope that many fruitful links will come out of the day.

I wish you all a safe journey home.

# Workshops

*Note: The discussion points listed in each of these notes are points and suggestions made by individual participants during the sessions rather than conclusions agreed by the workshop as a whole.*

## Workshop 1: Creating opportunities for engagement between single faith based bodies

*In some contexts, sport has a special role in creating enjoyable and educative encounter between people whose main educational or work context is predominantly within their own faith community. This workshop explores the value of that and also looks at some of the issues around single faith teams playing each other – whether that is school sports teams or one of the now increasingly common ‘vicars versus imams’ or ‘imams versus rabbis’ cricket and football matches!*

**Presenters: Wasim Riaz, Project Manager, and Shana Khan, Association of Muslim Schools Inter Faith Games Programme**  
**Alan Sefton, Head, Arsenal in the Community**

**Facilitator: Dr Harriet Crabtree, Executive Director, IFN**

**Dr Crabtree** welcomed participants and invited Mr Wasim Riaz and Ms Shana Khan to talk about the Inter Faith Games Programme. A copy of the slides used in their PowerPoint presentation is at the end of this note.

**Mr Riaz and Ms Khan** made the following points:

- The Interfaith Games was conceptualised by the Association of Muslim Schools in a meeting with the Muslim Sports Council who supported the event from the outset. It began in 2015. It was a chance to bring students together from different faiths and to promote community cohesion. There had been only 3 months between the idea and the first Games taking place. The Mo Farah Foundation came on board quickly. They were keen to get girls involved in athletics as that was their aim.
- In the first year there were 15 schools involved including 1 Catholic school from Blackburn – the latter won the regional athletics event.
- As a Muslim organisation it is easy to engage Muslim schools but it is difficult to know how best to engage other faiths. The Association of Muslim Schools (AMS) uses social media, email and telephone. They also engage with the equivalent of the AMS in other faith communities but they don't all work in the same way. The feedback is that the schools are proud of taking part.
- The AMS operates in three regions in England – North, Midlands and South – and has boys and girls programmes in each region. It has now been expanded to three sports in each area, including athletics and football for both boys and girls, netball for girls and basketball for boys. They try to avoid events taking place during Ramadan, half terms and exams. In 2018 the events will be in July rather than May. Until now only Year 7 and Year 8 pupils have been involved but they are also hoping to include primary schools next year.

- The results have included an increased awareness of sport amongst schools. For many Muslim schools sport is a luxury rather than priority. They often don't have the equipment to set up sports teams. A lot of schools that have entered from other faiths have come from sports colleges. They have a range of abilities but everyone has a good time while playing and in between games. Eventually they would like the schools to enter mainstream sports tournaments.
  - AMS has a partnership with the FA and 3FF among others. The Interfaith Games is the start but hopefully through it they will then have the desire to contact the partners to get more involved.
  - AMS has set up the AMS Football League in which schools visit each other throughout the year playing home and away as a good preparation for entering the mainstream. This helps them with confidence and gives the school community something to be proud of. Such activities are a good opportunity to get on with one another and to find commonalities. For example 3FF did an ice-breaker exercise with some students relating to which football teams they supported. This helped the pupils to mix freely and they enjoyed it. A number of conservative Muslim girls schools from around the UK have entered who initially didn't want male officials present but still participated when female referees could not be recruited. That was a challenge, but there was a lot of enthusiasm and there were girls playing with aspirations to take sport further who were from a school that didn't even have basic equipment or facilities. They said they really wanted to win so that they could tell their headteacher in order to ask for funding and equipment.
  - AMS was nominated for a British Ethnic Diversity Sports Award. It didn't win but the nomination was a good motivation to continue the work.
- Following the presentation, there were a number of questions and comments. Responses from the presenters are included in italics.
- The participant's daughter attends an Islamic school and they don't have sports resources. Does AMS work in Manchester? How do you ensure that there are no men working with the girls?  
*Initially it was advertised that there would be no men at the events in order to make sure that the schools participated, but that was not realistically possible because of other venue staff. On the day the schools said it didn't matter. Wasim and other male staff were allowed to stay – nearly every girl was wearing a hijab and one wore a full-face veil (designed for sports). Shana had started as a netball match referee but ended up facilitating and working on social media as well.*
  - It was a good way to break down stereotypes about women wearing the veil.
  - If sport is not a priority in the schools, how do you sell the idea to the parents? Is it about the wellbeing/physical benefits of sports? Do you have to adopt a communications strategy?  
*The schools explain it to the parents. AMS has little engagement with parents. AMS is transparent about venues, timings and so forth. Sometimes the main concern is whether the pupils will be home on time. AMS consults with the schools. In some schools they prefer to have all the different sports on one day, but in others they prefer to have each sport on a different day so that pupils can take part in more than one.*



- Bridging Difference in Leeds has used sport to bring Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities together. The project uses arts as well as sports, including sailing. As a key part of it they brought a group of young leaders together to organise the events and had facilitated dialogue with them. The continuity allowed them to get to know each other better and challenge some difficult issues. It is very important to provide the opportunity for people to ask questions in an environment where that will be respected. The key is to get people talking after the sports. The project has used people with dialogue facilitation skills for this and that can cost money.
- Funding is often a major issue. Many projects get a Development Officer and then the funding is discontinued; or they don't have funds to take a project forward in a safe, carefully prepared way.
- His preferred model is having mixed teams because it's important for children to mix from an early age. Team events are better sometimes than individual sports such as athletics. For the Arsenal sessions kids came as individuals and played naturally together rather than as school teams. However, school teams are also good and children have got to learn to play against each other. Coaches and parents need to back this up but they can be more challenging than the kids!
- Questions need to be considered about which sports to use, who is brought together and how the competition will work. Coaches are often not keen to mix their teams together but the kids don't mind. Communication is very important.
- Originally Arsenal just got kids to play. Now they are also doing a scheme which adds an educational element, mixing schools and faiths. It is because of the power of a football club that Arsenal is able to do this. The connection with Arsenal has got to be strong and visible. They try to hold sessions at the stadium and to include a stadium tour as well then kids are very happy! However, the sessions must always involve football because that is what the kids associate with Arsenal.

**Dr Crabtree** thanked Mr Riaz and Ms Khan for their presentation.

She then invited **Mr Alan Sefton** to offer some reflections from Arsenal in the Community. **Mr Sefton** made the following points:

- He has been working with Arsenal for over 30 years. Early on they brought Jews and Muslims together through a body which existed at the time called the Maimonides Foundation. A key question to consider is whether inter faith sports events should be solely about sport or should have bolt-ons such as education and dialogue.
- Arsenal started by getting people involved – children and parents – and people got to know one another so that was already breaking down barriers. It doesn't matter where you come from, everyone celebrates with you if score a goal! Perhaps this is good enough. There is as much held in common as divides us.
- Arsenal is now working with secondary schools (initially Catholic, Jewish and Muslim). They are preparing materials that they are going to deliver to one another about topics, for example, dress, festivals and customs. The secondary schools will then present to primary schools. Afterwards they'll all get together and play football. The culture of the game of football will be uppermost. Respect is very important. Professionals need to abide by this too.

At the invitation of **Dr Crabtree**, **Mr Arun Kang** also offered some brief reflections:



- The Inter Faith Games are very young and have had a great start. It is a fantastic idea to get faith schools to interact with one another. The key will be getting them to interact socially as well.
- Sporting Equals has had experience of mixing up teams in their sailing projects. They found that a lot of people from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities can't swim and don't have any sailing experience so had to get them to work with others.
- Dialogue and workshops are great but sometimes informal mingling through playing sport is equally as good. For example, in the Making Equals project in Croydon there was a mixed informal game of a handball/volleyball and some of the Muslim girls in hijabs were the most aggressive in the game tackling hard. It was fantastic because some of the young people there who were former gang members hadn't expected it so it was an effective way of changing prejudices and breaking down barriers without saying a word.

In discussion there were a number of questions and comments. Where responses were given these are included in italics.

- What led Arsenal to the decision to bring faith groups together? Was it a reaction to a specific problem identified by Arsenal in its fan base or local area?  
*Initially, over 20 years ago, it was a fan or a local resident from the Maimonides Foundation who brought together Jews and Muslims. Later it became much more of an Arsenal programme. Arsenal now has a programme called Arsenal for Everyone because they want to make the Club relevant to everyone. This includes people with disabilities. The latest development is a sensory room costing over £100,000 for people with autism so they can watch matches within their*

*comfort zone. The room can then be used during the week for classes with autistic children and young adults. Those caring for them need all the help they can get, including from professional football clubs. That expanded to Arsenal in the Community doing other community projects with different people.*

- Many of the examples of projects today have involved Abrahamic faiths. Often projects begin with these. Do you have any reflections on involving groups from other faiths / faith schools?  
*Arsenal wants to involve people from all faith backgrounds and no faith. A Sikh gentleman who teaches at a Jewish school has been involved. They want all to be comfortable. It depends on who is in the community. Charlton Athletic works with the local community and its places of worship. Burnley is largely White Christian and South Asian Muslim. It would welcome people from other faiths but there are not many in the community. Football clubs need to work with the community they have so that will vary depending on where the club is based.*
- The Association of Muslim Schools tried to involve more faith communities last year. It identified 12 Sikh schools and 12 Hindu schools, run by a Hindu trust, the Avanti Trust. It also tried to contact the Network of Sikh Organisations UK. It's a growing area and AMS is able to offer advice to new schools.
- In Leicester the majority of schools are multi faith. Could some guidelines be produced for local authorities to adopt? Schools are willing to accommodate multi gender multi faith sport but parents are often not keen. Racism is unfortunately a growing issue. Sport is a great vehicle to address racism as well.
- It's up to the parents to encourage their children to get involved and not be estranged.

- Facilitated dialogue once young people are together is important. It is not enough just to get them together and pretend they all get on if they don't. There is also a need to explore key differences.
- It is not just about children and young people. Parents need to be educated as well, especially those who operate very traditionally. Engaging the parents will help translate these issues to children which will help them to integrate.
- Timing is key. If sport is used as a tool for engagement, when should dialogue begin? It can't be too soon and it needs to be carefully structured.

**Dr Crabtree** thanked everyone for their contributions.

## And the final results...?



- Increased awareness for sport amongst schools
- Promotion of healthy competition
- Exciting annual milestone
- Learning from each other
- Promoting respect between different faiths.






## Workshop 2: Working with sport and physical exercise as part of developing local inter faith initiatives

*Local inter faith initiatives have increasingly been using sport as an opportunity to widen their work and local community links. The level of links to sporting bodies and the types of sports vary from annual matches and tournaments through to community sports 'join ins'. What are the benefits and challenges of this?*

**Facilitator: David Hampshire, Assistant Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK**

**Presenter: Trip Pannu, Windsor and Maidenhead Community Forum**

**Mr Hampshire** welcomed participants, and explained the background to the theme of the workshop, highlighting local inter faith initiatives using sport and physical exercise to bring people of different faiths, beliefs

## The birth of the games!




Started in 2015

Mission to bring faiths schools closer through sport

Promote community cohesion



## So, what's the score?




3 regions - North, Midlands, South.

Boys & Girls

1 week in Summer Term

Athletics, Football, Netball, Basketball



and backgrounds together. He invited Mr Pannu to offer his opening presentation.

**Mr Pannu** offered reflections on the work of the Windsor and Maidenhead Community Forum (WAMCF) in using the power of sport to build good inter faith relations. He made the following points:

- WAMCF ([www.wamcf.org](http://www.wamcf.org)) started in the early 1980s, initially with a variety of activities, such as visiting places of worship and holding dialogue and community activities. It was identified quite early in their history that the engagement of young people was lacking, and members began to think of ways to increase this.
- WAMCF recognised that different communities in the area were interested in sport. In the Sikh community, for example, participation in football, cricket and kabaddi was particularly high. It was thought that sport could therefore be a good way to bring people together. Events were initially organised to bring people together through sport. A football tournament was held, and lots of young men in particular came together in this way.
- Engaging women and girls was initially more challenging, and it took a long time before this work flourished. This started to prosper with the organisation of a hockey tournament, with people from across local faith communities invited to take part. This tournament now takes place annually and is in its fifteenth year. The first inter faith women's cricket tournament was organised by the Forum this year. The tournament is run by youth workers, along with a variety of other annual events. These events also aim to engage children and young people, and this also brings in their parents and relatives.
- These activities also provide a catalyst for other forms of engagement, such as the sharing of food and conversations. As such, they really help to break down barriers, and enable people to get to know one another in a light touch and friendly way.
- Spending time with neighbours is a powerful way of breaking down barriers, and this helps improve communities. One reason sport is so powerful in terms of building relationships is because it enables people to spend time with one another without the pressure of formal conversation.
- WAMCF has the support of the local authority and the local newspaper, which provides excellent coverage and publicity. This has been of enormous benefit.
- WAMCF's sporting activities are also organised with health awareness in mind, and sport is an excellent way of raising awareness of the importance of exercise across the community, helping to combat conditions such as diabetes.
- Sport is a unifying aspect of community life and across its history has been a hugely significant part of the work of WAMCF. People make friends through sport, and, most importantly, it has the power to bring people of all backgrounds, ages and genders together. Barriers are being broken down more and more as the younger generations in faith communities grow up. Participation in sport is being seen as more and more mainstream, and this is making inter faith sports initiatives have greater impact.
- WAMCF is happy to be contacted to provide advice based on their experiences working with communities to bring people together through sport. It would be good to have a means of sharing good practice between local inter

faith organisations and others about this area of work.

In discussion the following points were made:

- Better partnerships also need to be formed between university representatives, student unions, faith-based organisations and sports societies. It is sometimes difficult for professionals working in sport in higher and further education contexts to engage with students and young people of different backgrounds. It would be helpful to have recognised good practice published about this to assist with widening engagement. It would also be helpful to have contacts in local and national inter faith organisations so sporting and educational bodies can learn from their experiences.
- The power of the imagination is important when it comes to bringing communities together through sport. The example of the success of the Lebanese Rugby League team at the recent World Cup in Australia is a good example of sport breaking down barriers to participation. The team, largely composed of members of the Lebanese diaspora in Sydney, caught the imagination of the public in Lebanon, and participation has increased there enormously. It is too easy to think that cultural barriers cannot be broken down, but sport proves this wrong.
- Sports charities have struggled historically to engage women and girls from diverse communities. With swimming, for example, a lot of women and girls require complete privacy, though other sports are more flexible. A lot of work has begun with faith communities to begin to break down these barriers. Some faith centres and places of worship are becoming more flexible in their attitudes and are now quite willing to support such initiatives as inter faith sports events. Some are still hard to engage nonetheless, and further work needs to be done in this respect. The perception that sport is a male dominated space can be a big barrier to the participation of women and girls.
- Interfaith MK has just begun to run inter faith sports initiatives. At the first event, 15 people from a number of faith backgrounds came together to play sport and to get to know one another. It was important, initially at least, that the sport was not overtly competitive, and was focused on fun. Inter faith organisations often over focus on discussing complicated issues; sport focuses on the possibilities created by simple interpersonal encounter. It has the ability to encourage participation when other forms of activity may seem worrying or even threatening. Attracting young people, however, even to sporting activities, still remains challenging.
- From the perspective of sporting organisations, it is also important to educate participants from diverse backgrounds about the sports with which they are engaging. This is also a light touch way of enabling people to meet and interact with one another without feeling obliged to discuss complex or sensitive issues.
- Leicestershire County Cricket Club has been actively trying to engage diverse faith communities in cricket. Part of this process has encompassed the recognition that cricket is just as much part of the culture of, for example, South Asian communities, as it is others. As a result of this, the organisation has staged an inter faith cricket festival, which has been instrumental in bringing people together.

- It is vitally important to engage with faith leaders and other senior figures in faith communities. These can provide access to a huge range of people, and therefore inspiring change.
- It is crucial to invest time in building trust and credibility. Initial scepticism often needs to be overcome.
- Higher and further education institutions can help to play a vital role in providing safe spaces for people of all backgrounds, and young men and women to participate in sport.
- Table Tennis England has been taking their sport to places of worship, and has found this to be an excellent way of engaging faith communities. This doesn't have to be competitive – it is vital that sports organisations use their imagination to engage people. Another excellent example is of a sports organisation hosting 'midnight football' to bring people together after the breaking of the fast during Ramadan.
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has begun to use its recreational spaces to encourage participation in sport, and this has been an excellent way of encouraging young people in particular to socialise with one another. National faith communities can develop these activities to include an inter faith dimension.
- It is important that young people are able to look up to role models in national sports teams, especially if they are recognisable as coming from a particular faith community.
- There is a problem with some sports being associated with a culture that could alienate some communities. This involves issues such as the consumption of alcohol after participation. National sporting organisations need to do more to educate people at a local level about these issues. This has to be part of a development programme, not just individual workshops in specific locations.
- Local inter faith organisations can also use larger events, such as festivals and celebrations to encourage people to engage through sport. Interfaith MK helped a local football club to set up a football pitch at an Islamic Arts Festival, and this got significant numbers of people playing together.
- Engaging people through sport will take time, and responses can vary. Local inter faith organisations should not expect the same results regardless of who they are working with. Faith venues are usually managed by volunteers who are elsewhere employed during the working day. For some, other issues will be their priority, such as security, or working to challenge hate crime. So instant results should not be expected by inter faith organisations.
- This subject does not require a 'one size fits all' approach. Most importantly, if an organisation is seen as being there for the long term, they are most likely to succeed.

**Mr Hampshire** thanked participants for their contributions. This discussion was the beginning of a process. Inter faith organisations are looking to do more work around sport and inter faith engagement and many of the member bodies of the Inter Faith Network for the UK are interested in this.



## Workshop 3: Sport and inter faith engagement in a wider inclusion context

*Sport has a great ability to knit communities together and to contribute to understanding and friendship. What do we see these as being?*

*Are there particular issues we need to keep in mind? For example:*

- *How do we make room for genuine mutual learning – which often comes only through repeated chances for encounter?*
- *What about sport involving faith groups and non-religious people?*
- *Inter faith sport to this point has not seen many examples of participation by those with disabilities. How might that change?*
- *What about the wider climate of the views and behaviour of fans where faith is concerned – how can clubs encourage a culture of respect?*

*A chance to discuss these and other challenging questions around inclusion and respect in the context of today's theme.*

**Presenters: Helen Derby of the English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) and Kathryn Wall, Cohesion Officer Gwent Police/Heddlu Gwent, and Tola Munro of Gwent Police Multi Faith Panel and President of the National Black Police Association**

**Facilitator: Fadumo Olow, Sporting Equals**

**Ms Fadumo Olow** welcomed those present and invited Ms Helen Derby to talk about the EFDS's work, in particular the Get Out, Get Active programme.

*A copy of the slides used in Ms Derby's PowerPoint presentation is at the end of this note.*

**Ms Derby** made the following points:

- The English Federation of Disability Sport is a charity which aims to make disabled people active. It has a research team, and consults with disabled people on many areas involved in physical activity and sport. Get Out, Get Active (GOGA) was a result of this research. GOGA is a £4.5 million investment from Spirit of 2012 to get the very least active people active and to get non-disabled people active with disabled people – together.
- Get Out Get Active works in 18 localities, within all 4 nations of the UK and alongside many national partners. These localities were chosen on the basis of research and individual community needs. The programme looks to reach all inactive groups in 'active recreation' through outreach, engagement and effective marketing
- The research found that, within England, 74% of disabled people were inactive but wanted to be active. Many preferred to be active in groups which included non-disabled people.
- Drawing on the research, the Get Out Get Active programme has developed 10 principles (see slide). These include:
  - It is important to make people's first experience of sport or physical activity a positive one.
  - Peer support and the social aspect of participation are very important – sometimes it can be helpful to begin with this and add physical activity later.
  - It is vital that people are engaged with a programme from the



beginning – joint working and community co-design characterised the programme.

The presentation then looked at what is working well within the localities and highlighted some good practice in Bradford (see slide).

**Ms Olow** thanked Ms Derby for her presentation, and invited Kathryn Wall and Tola Munro to offer some reflections from the Gwent Police context.

**Ms Wall and Mr Munro** made the following points:

- Gwent Police wanted to establish a multi-faith working group to work together to tackle local issues. Gwent aspires to be a diverse police force. One of the purposes of the group is to be involved in consultations on Community Policing and other community safety matters.
- Feedback from the group has indicated that there is not enough awareness in the wider community of the positive community and inter faith work of Gwent Police. In response, Gwent uses events focused around food and sports to raise the profile of its community relations work.
- A key aspect of this is to avoid using overly ‘police-y’ language to communicate more effectively with the community. Many of the activities are held under the ‘We Stand Together’ banner.
- Activities have been held which celebrate community and diversity through football and through sharing food. The football activities are all 5-a-side, and people can both register as individuals or as part of pre-formed teams. Other sports have also been used, and the next planned is badminton.

- These kinds of events have a number of positive benefits: they showcase people working positively together, while also breaking down barriers around Police and access to policing.



- Policing as it is known today was established by Sir Robert Peel in the 1820s. 9 principles underpinned his approach to policing, and a key one of these was ‘policing by consent’. This is still a fundamental principle today, and community engagement activity is what gives policing its legitimacy.

In discussion there were a number of questions and comments. Where responses were given these are included in *italics*.

- What can sports do to engage communities and get them active?  
*Negative views of sport often begin in school – people need a positive experience of sport to get them hooked. It is therefore important to create such opportunities.*
- Non-competitive, social approaches may be preferable for many people.  
*Get Out Get Active has stopped using the term ‘sport’ altogether – people find ‘physical activity’ more appealing, and less associated with competition.*
- ‘Turn up and play’ activities, rather than those based around enrolling a club or team, are often more accessible, and enable people to socialise.
- Co-design is key – it is important to know what the community actually wants to do. Discussing this with the target community has led to development by Essex Cricket of educational sessions around nutrition and diet, the benefits of physical activity for women and children, and information around health issues alongside the actual activity.

- There is often a lot of inactivity in prisons, so taking cricket into those as a form of physical activity has had real benefits. In addition to getting people exercising, it has helped to teach responsibility and leadership. Research shows that a very high percentage of offenders re-offended in order to get back inside as they lacked skills to thrive outside. Responding to this, the programme has begun to run courses training young offenders to be match officials and umpires.
- It is important to encourage more inclusive sport in all contexts. This often involves making only small changes. People are keen to participate with others, not just in 'disabled-only' sport.
- Birmingham Football Association has begun receiving a high number of referrals from the Home Office of young men who have been identified through the CONTEST strategy as having strong links with far-right extremist groups but who are also mad about football. The programme offers mentoring, and also training in refereeing, coaching and setting up clubs in the community, giving people skills and responsibilities.
- Partnerships are hugely important. Working together both across sports and with other sectors and community groups has made a difference to the success of programmes.
- Faith-based and Special Educational Needs and Disability schools seem actively to want to work with Arsenal and to learn how to mix better in the community. The Premier League is very diverse and multi-faith, which reflects the diversity of the area of North-East London where Arsenal is based. It is important to encourage people by saying "If you are proud of your club, be proud of the diversity of the team and of the city it is a part of."
- Some aspects of diversity are more obvious than others – you can see skin colour, but faith and sexuality are not always visible.
- Educating grassroots referees and coaches about how to engage with the needs of people of different faiths is important. There is not always awareness at the grassroots of relevant rules, such as those around headscarves for example.
- Referees and coaches do not always reflect the diversity of their communities – there is a need to help train people from BAME communities to take on these roles too.
- Role models that look like us can have a huge impact.
- Faith organisations often expect sport to come to them, and are often led by aging members of the community. They need to think differently about that.
- Places of worship often have large halls which can be used for sports – taking the initiative and inviting in sports groups can be very helpful.
- Older faith leaders often don't think about or prioritise sport.
- A lot of programmes that involve the community in their design have begun to include a wider range of sports than the more obvious ones.


**Ms Olow** thanked everyone for their contributions.

# Get Out Get Active


Helen Derby

## Principles to get more people active




Drive awareness

1. Use the channels I already trust
2. Stay local to me



Engage the audience

3. See me as an individual
4. Talk to as many of my values as possible
5. Continue to fulfil my values in new ways






Offer support and Reassurance

6. Reassure me I'm going to fit in
7. Make me feel I can do it
8. Make it easy for me to tell you my needs
9. Ensure my first experience is good
10. Encourage me via existing advocates

## Key GOGA ingredients ...

- Reaching all inactive groups in "active recreation" through:
  - Outreach
  - Engagement
  - Effective marketing
- Supporting disabled and non-disabled people to be active together
- Focus on engaging people through use of ten principles and six values
- Three types of sustainability:
  - Individuals active for life
  - Inclusive local system
  - Transferable learning



## What's working well ...

## GOGA areas and partners ...

**Areas:**

Bradford

Manchester - City, Rochdale and Wigan Lincolnshire

London - Lambeth and Wandsworth

Northern Ireland - Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon/ Derry City and Strabane

Nottingham City

Stoke on Trent

Thanet

Scotland - Fife, Forth Valley and Grampians

Wales - Pembrookshire, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Wrexham

**National Partners:**

Age UK

Disability Rights UK

Sporting Equals

Volunteering Matters

Women in Sport

Street Games

Park run

England Athletics

YST

ASA

Play England

## Reaching the least active disabled and non-disabled people ...

Offering refreshments to participants draws new participants in to 'come and meet us' and retains current participants

Use of familiar faces in the community to reach those less engaged

Referral approach – working with local health providers or other organisations with reach

Work with influential services to build an understanding of the importance of active recreation



Visiting local amenities such as the TFD centre, the library, the local church, Local shops and any centre to try and understand each community group and why they remain inactive

Include a social element to activity is also a positive for recruiting and retaining participants

Getting an 'in' with local organisations and potential facilities that have community reach

Delivering activities on customer need we have had small working groups set up for some initial consultation

Peer support

**Diversity Statistics**

51% are female, 49% are male

16% are over 65

87% are white, 3% are Black / Black British, 2% are British mixed race, 8% are Asian/ British Asian

59% of people are Christian, 25% have no religious belief, 5% are Muslim

47% are married or in civil partnerships

6% are gay, lesbian or bisexual

8% have a main language other than English (Polish, Punjabi, Gujarati, Bengali, Urdu)

19% of population have an impairment or health condition

**Physical activity statistics**

In England 74% of disabled people are inactive in comparison to 49% of non-disabled people (no activity in last month).

Lack of physical activity is costing the UK an estimated £7.4 billion a year, £5.8 billion to the NHS alone.

64% of disabled people would prefer to take part in activities with non-disabled people. Currently only 51% are doing so.

In England 56% of disabled people would like to be more active in the future. 73% of non-disabled people are open to taking part with disabled people.

1509 227750 federation@efits.co.uk www.efits.co.uk/GOGA #GetOutGetActive

## Supporting active together...

Raising awareness of inclusive activity within the community – addressing perceived challenges and fears

Relationships built with local disability organisations, where members have gone onto promote our sessions

Targeted family based activity

Provide inclusive training for the GOGA workforce

Improving the mainstream offer to better provide for all

Right venue, right time and right offer – determined through consultation with local people

Engaging care workers and support workers in activity alongside their clients

Inclusive marketing materials

Being honest and open about what we're offering

Advertised as sessions for all abilities – consider language used!

Targeting specific communities and groups with a mix of disabled and non-disabled people already engaging

### Bradford:

- Areas- Manningham, Holmewood and Keighley
- Joint working with Sporting Equals to get to understand community needs
- Consultation/ visits within communities to determine need
- Partnership with organisations and persons of different faith
- Diverse range of activities developed for communities ie: Womens only cycling, family fitness, badminton for men, Huntun Tai Chi
- Positive relationship between GOGA and local community.....still growing

Get Out  
Get Active



Helen Derby

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THE INTER FAITH NETWORK FOR THE UK  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SPORTING EQUALS  
PRESENTS

# Using the power of sport to build good inter faith relations: inter faith week symposium

14 November 2017 10.30am to 4pm at the Leicester Tigers  
Welford Road Stadium, Aylestone Road, Leicester LE2 7TR

The UK is increasingly diverse and how people of different backgrounds get on with each other is ever more important.

Sport is important in its own right. It is also a key route for helping people engage with each other, for breaking down barriers of ignorance, prejudice and suspicion and creating a sense of cooperation for the common good. An underexplored but very important aspect of that is inter faith interaction through sport.

This Inter Faith Week, the Inter Faith Network for the UK and Sporting Equals are bringing together a range of practitioners from sport, inter faith and faith bodies to explore some key questions:

- How can sport help people of different backgrounds to meet one another, come to understand each other better and develop skills for cooperation?
- What are some of the ways, at national and local levels, that organisations – from national governing bodies through to local community programmes – are furthering inter faith understanding and cooperation through sport?

## MORNING PROGRAMME

- 10.30**            **Registration, refreshments and informal networking**
- 11.00**            **Welcome and setting the context for the day**  
**Rt Revd Richard Atkinson OBE, Co-Chair, Inter Faith Network for the UK**
- 11.10**            **The power of sport to develop and strengthen inter faith understanding and trust**
- Arun Kang, Chief Executive Officer, Sporting Equals**, offers opening reflections on sport as a positive agent in building community cohesion and on the important role it can play in building inter faith cooperation and understanding.  
**Q and A**
- 11.20**            **Inter faith engagement – a key area for development**
- Tim Mathias, Inclusion and Equalities Executive for Premiership Rugby**, talks about the vital importance of sports bodies developing strong links with communities and looking to find ways to support good inter faith relations and cohesion locally through such routes as community engagement programmes.  
**Q and A**
- 11.35**            **‘Dialogue on the spot’ – a chance to talk with your neighbour about what you’ve heard so far**
- 11.40**            **Clubs and inter faith initiatives working to create bridges of understanding locally**
- Matt Parish, Director of Education and Inclusion, Burnley Football Club** and **Afrasiab Anwar, Community Faith Coordinator, Building Bridges in Burnley**  
Burnley FC has worked closely with local communities on a number of its projects. Matt and Afrasiab give an insight into the jointly developed Building Bridges Community Cup where teams of 11–13 year olds from mosques and churches from across Burnley come together to battle it out for a coveted cup. The teams are mixed and the experience enables young players to get to know each other and contributes to local cohesion and integration. Matt will also be sharing some reflections about how football clubs can encourage positive community relations, including inter faith tolerance and respect.  
**Q and A**
- 11.55**            **What do we gain from inter faith sports and training?**
- Sadia Akram** talks about the impact on her and other women’s lives of a women’s sports programme, initially run by the Council of Christians and Jews and funded through the Near Neighbours programme of the Church



Urban Fund. Based mainly at the Maccabi Centre, it has drawn in women of a number of faiths and helped both to increase involvement in sport and physical exercise and to create and strengthen bonds of understanding and friendship.

**The Revd Canon Paul Hackwood, Executive Chair of the Church Urban Fund and Director of Near Neighbours** talks about the importance of local sports and well-being inter faith initiatives of this kind within civil society and the reasons that Near Neighbours has been supporting and encouraging many.

**Q and A**

**12.10 Introduction to the workshops**

**12.15 Workshops – details at end of day programme**

**13.15 Lunch**  
Vegetarian lunch available  
Prayer room available

## **AFTERNOON PROGRAMME**

**14.15 Brief feedback from workshops**

**14.30 Inter faith engagement – not bucking the tough issues**

**Shaheen Bi, Head of Projects at Sporting Equals**, talks about Sporting Equals 'Making Equals' project in the London Borough of Croydon which had input from a range of bodies including Croydon Faiths Together. Dialogue, including tough issues, was very much part of this project.

**Q and A**

**14.45 Keeping the positive in view – the power of inter faith teams to model and encourage harmony and cohesion**

**Arfan Akram, East London Cricket Co-Coordinator, and Tour Captain and team member, Cllr Mukesh Patel**, members of the East London multi faith team arranged by Essex County Cricket Club which has played the Vatican XI this year and last year, talk about the unique experience, what they and their colleagues learned from it and how it can be a beacon for similar endeavours.

**Q and A**

**15.00 Plenary discussion**

We will have heard during the day about a range of different sports initiatives that are helping create and strengthen inter faith understanding and cooperation. In this session participants are invited to share their reflections and to consider what practical and strategic steps may be helpful for the future.

Some questions that participants may wish to consider are:

- e) How do sport and inter faith initiatives contribute to cohesion and integration in local communities? How might that be strengthened?
- f) How might we increase the opportunities for people of different faiths and beliefs to come to develop bonds of understanding and friendship through sport?
- g) Are there additional ways that faith communities, sports bodies, schools, local authorities and other agencies might encourage and support this kind of activity?
- h) How might inter faith initiatives building a sports dimension into their programmes?

**15.20 Panel**

Reflections, drawing on their respective fields of expertise/engagement and on what they have heard during the day, from

**Associate Professor John Williams**, Co-Director, University of Leicester Unit for Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement

**Rehan Haidar**, Senior Policy Officer, Department for Communities and Local Government, who is supporting development of a new integration strategy.

**Dr Harriet Crabtree OBE**, Executive Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK

**with Q and A**

**15.45 Closing reflections from the Chair**

**15.50 Formal close of the conference**

**15.50 to 16.15 Refreshments**

# WORKSHOPS

## 1. Creating opportunities for engagement between single faith based bodies

**Facilitator: Dr Harriet Crabtree OBE, Executive Director, Inter Faith Network**

In some contexts, sports has a special role in creating enjoyable and educative encounter between people whose main educational or work context is predominantly within their own faith community. This workshop explores the value of that and also looks at some of the issues around single faith teams playing each other – whether that is school sports teams or one of the now increasingly common ‘vicars versus imams’ or ‘imams versus rabbis’ cricket and football matches!

**Wasim Riaz, Project Manager, and Shana Khan, Association of Muslim Schools Inter Faith Games Programme** talk about the AMS Inter Faith Games which take place across its three regional hubs in the North, Midlands and South. The Games are aimed at under 13s (years 7 and 8) with a programme of events for boys and girls at faith schools across the UK. Partners include the FA, the English Schools FA, the Muslim Sports Council and 3FF.

**Alan Sefton, Head, Arsenal in the Community** offers some reflections from the perspective of their engagement in this area.

## 2. Working with sport and physical exercise as part of developing local inter faith initiatives

**Facilitator: David Hampshire, Assistant Director, Inter Faith Network for the UK**

Local inter faith initiatives have increasingly been using sport as an opportunity to widen their work and local community links. The level of links to sporting bodies and the types of sports vary from annual matches and tournaments through to community sports ‘join in’s. What are the benefits and challenges of this?

With a presentation by **Trip Pannu of Windsor and Maidenhead Community Forum**, which runs an annual inter faith cricket match and also has a wider sports activities programme

## 3. Sport and inter faith engagement in a wider inclusion context

**Facilitator: Fadumo Olow, Sporting Equals**

Sport has a great ability to knit communities together and to contribution to understanding and friendship. What do we see these as being?

Are there particular issues we need to keep in mind? For example:

- How do we make room for genuine mutual learning – which often comes only through repeated chances for encounter?
- What about sport involving faith groups and non-religious people?

- Inter faith sport to this point has not seen many examples of participation by those with disabilities. How might that change?
- What about the wider climate of the views and behaviour of fans where faith is concerned – how can clubs encourage a culture of respect?

A chance to discuss these and other challenging questions around inclusion and respect in the context of today's theme.

With inputs from:

**Helen Derby of the English Federation of Disability Sport**

**Kathryn Wall, Cohesion Officer Gwent Police/Heddlu Gwent, and Tola Munro of Gwent Police Multi Faith Panel and President of the National Black Police Association**

13 November 2017

# The Inter Faith Network for the UK

The Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN) works to promote understanding, cooperation and good relations between organisations and persons of different faiths in the UK. It links and works with national faith community representative bodies, inter faith organisations, academic and educational organisations with an interest in inter faith relations, as well as with other organisations including Government and other public agencies, to strengthen inter faith understanding and cooperation in the UK. IFN is unique in its scope and role both within the UK and in Europe. It has been bringing organisations and people together for 30 years and its work is always evolving to meet fresh needs.

IFN carries out its work of strengthening good inter faith relations through:

- providing advice and support to inter faith organisations around the country to add value to their work
- running a helpline which each year assists hundreds of people with their inter faith projects or issues
- advocating for support of local inter faith groups and national and regional inter faith initiatives
- producing resources, in cooperation with its members, on issues of common concern
- bringing its member bodies and others together regularly to meet and discuss issues of common concern
- other programmes of work including Faith and Public Life and Inter Faith Week

A key programme of IFN is Inter Faith Week which takes place in November each year and which:

- highlights the good work done by local faith, inter faith and faith-based groups and organisations
- draws new people into inter faith learning and cooperation
- enables greater interaction between people of different backgrounds
- helps develop integrated and neighbourly communities
- celebrates diversity and commonality

For more information about IFN, visit [www.interfaith.org.uk](http://www.interfaith.org.uk). For Inter Faith Week visit [www.interfaithweek.org](http://www.interfaithweek.org) The 2018 Week takes place from 11–18 November.

The work of IFN is supported by faith communities, trusts, other donors, and the Department for Communities and Local Government.



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

## Sporting Equals

Sporting Equals exists to actively promote greater involvement in sport and physical activity by disadvantaged communities particularly the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population. It is the national partner of Sport England and advisor to the Department of Culture Media and Sport.

Its mission is to make a sustainable difference to the inclusion of all under-represented communities in sport and physical activity, so as to improve the long-term opportunities and health outcomes of those communities. The five outcomes towards which it works are: increasing participation; identifying and showcasing talent; diversifying the sport sector; improving health and lifestyles; and building cohesive communities.

It does this through:

- supporting agencies in becoming more inclusive
- promoting sport and healthier living to BME communities
- research and building insight locally to develop new innovative models of participation
- empowering BME organisations to deliver sport and physical activity locally

It works closely with both the providers of sporting opportunities (national governing bodies, local authorities, leisure trusts and sports organisations) and the users of sporting opportunities (community and faith groups, local clubs, charities and individuals). It has a network of over 5,000 organisations and has strong links with NHS agencies and other organisations addressing health inequalities.

Sporting Equals is also the founder of the British Ethnic Minority Diversity Sports Awards (BEDSA). BEDSA is its flagship project which helps celebrate the contributions made by BAME communities and drive change in the sector creating role models and recognising the hard work, dedication and talent on and off the field of play.

For further information about Sporting Equals see: <http://www.sportingequals.org.uk/>



**Front cover**

*Top row (L to R)*

Girls taking part in the Interfaith Games, a project of the Association of Muslim Schools

Sean Lofting and Tamsyn Woodman, Surrey Football Association

Essex and Vatican cricket teams, Walthamstow

*Bottom row (L to R)*

Event participants in discussion

Boys taking part in Rugby For All, a project of Premiership Rugby

Event participants in discussion

**Back cover**

*Top row (L to R)*

Essex multi faith cricket team's visit to the Vatican

Arfan Akram and Cllr Mukesh Patel, East London Cricket

Sadia Akram, Rehan Haidar, Keith Ackerman

*Bottom row (L to R)*

Event participants in discussion

Women's sports programme in Manchester

Event participants in discussion

Published 2018 by the Inter Faith Network for the UK

Registered charity no 1068934  
Company limited by guarantee no 3443823  
Registered in England

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ISBN 1 902906 76 4

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The work of IFN is supported by faith communities, trusts,  
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# Sporting Equals

Promoting ethnic diversity in sport & physical activity