

Paper 1

National Assembly for Wales

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Inquiry into participation levels in sport in Wales

Response from : Show Racism the Red Card Wales

## **Background**

1. Show Racism the red Card Wales is a small organisation operating across Wales. The majority of its funding comes from Big Lottery Wales and partnership agreements with 11 Welsh Local Authorities. In addition, it receives financial support from the Football Association of Wales to the tune of £15,000 and in kind support from Trade unions. We have recently received support from two legal firms, Thompsons and Simpson Millar. Contrary to public opinion we receive no money from the football clubs, football players, or any other institution connected to football.
2. Our work is unique as we work with sporting role models. We primarily work with young children in schools, primary and secondary, young people in youth clubs and have in the last two years initiated a teacher training programme working to support teachers in tackling racism in schools setting.
3. We produce education material for use in and by schools in tackling racism, challenging homophobia, negative images of refugees and asylum seekers, Islamophobia, and on combating the new far right.

## **Our response**

4. SRTRC Wales welcomes the committee's initiative in holding this enquiry. It is something we have been arguing for and believe it necessary to challenge institutionalised perceptions that there is NO problem in Wales.
5. Further our evidence has to be read in two contexts. Firstly as from our experience and knowledge of working with over 10,000 children annually on these issues, we consider ourselves to have gained a unique insight in to the barriers that face young people, in particular minority ethnic communities in sport and a variety of other fields.
6. Secondly as we mention below, there is little research available and we know that in the past this has been used as a reason to not do anything whilst we await result of new research findings. We urge the committee to consider the qualitative evidence of our experience, and knowledge of working with young people and communities, whilst supporting our efforts to secure a strong robust independent evidence base.

7. In respect of the areas you want to examine. Our evidence adds real value to the following:
  - The availability of datasets and statistics to measure participation levels in sport, particularly those disaggregated by equality strand and socio-economic groups;
  - The opportunities and barriers to sports participation that exist for different groups of people, including by equality strand and socio-economic groups;
8. We would like to impress upon the committee what we know.
9. We know there is little research commissioned in to discrimination in sport. We have been told that it is difficult as the sample size is small for it to be statistically significant. We have been told that to conduct a statistically viable survey would be too expensive. Even after we have suggested that qualitative research is more appropriate, and more important, we still have not been able to access research grant support.
10. This is why we are embarking on a small qualitative research initiative of our own, and are in dialogue with Welsh academic institutions to conduct such a piece of work on our behalf. It is also why we support a bid being made by a new institute named the Research and Verification Institute to the lottery whose main aim is to commission research pertinent to minority ethnic communities.
11. We know also the lack of participation in sport by ethnic minority communities is complex. And there is a tendency to simplify and stereotype the different communities without a real comprehension of these communities' aspirations and culture.
12. For example, there is a marked difference between the Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Hindu communities in themselves, yet they are classed as Asian and provision of services to them are seen as homogenised. Similarly we class African and Caribbean as though they too are homogenised, we do not understand the difference between the South Korean and the Chinese, between the Somali and the Sudanese and the list can go on.
13. One can be forgiven for thinking that when it comes to playing sport, if all we did was to provide the opportunity for these communities to play that they would take up the opportunity. Many of the communities too would like that. The problem is, it's not that simple.
14. Refugees and asylum seekers are told that they not entitled to facilities. We know for many years they went and played in open parks in unstructured games for fear that if they accepted 'support' their status would be affected. Yet they still managed to host a refugee world cup between their own communities.

15. Then we create rules for people to participate, and we are not referring to the rules of a game. For example, to engage in one of the Football leagues, a team needs a designated pitch and posses £6,000 (I think this is the right figure) in their bank account. We are told this is in case they are fined or have to pay the referees costs. We know many working class young people and minority ethnic communities who simply cannot afford this.
16. This is further complicated by the discrimination faced by communities, their status in the society in which they live, and, how young people perceive and witness what is happening around them. This goes for both white and Black young people.
17. We know young people from minority communities who are grappling with the desires and attractions of western and eastern society. Between the requirements of religious observance and the demands of the being involved with their peer group.
18. In once sense a young person who has a non traditional family has a real advantage, as they can access the best of both worlds, but this is not the case for a great majority of Asian communities. Nor is this analysis the same for the African-Caribbean, Chinese communities or the Somali, Sudanese, Arabic, Polish, Bulgarian and a plethora of other communities who live in Wales.
19. What we know is we need to engage these communities on their terms; we need to improve our image of how we will look after the interest of their young people, not simple to promote our own tick box mentality that we have captured another targeted person for our statistic.
20. And we must not forget that even within these communities there are ism's that exist and which we need to be able to positively challenge, particularly with regards to young minority ethnic women and their engagement in sports. And herein lies the dichotomy, were these issues to be challenged we may lose access to the communities, if we continued without challenging we are complicit with forms of discrimination. It is not surprising that such sports organisations engage with a light touch and in many cases we use gatekeepers to justify our not tackling those issues.
21. We know we have to build trust and make an effort to create new and long terms opportunities.
22. We know that there is direct correlation between fighting racism and discrimination and increased participation. We know from our communities own history, and our experience of playing in main stream and minority football, that young people play to enjoy but only if it is safe to do so. Be it in a school environment, in a youth club, or in a structured league if there is, even a perception, that players, supported or coaches are racist or that there is unfairness or bias towards one community or one group, then young people who do not 'fit in' will disengage. Creating a level playing field by challenging racism and discrimination does increase participating. Yet this is not a priority

on any of the sporting body's radar, no doubt they will promoting equality is, but there is a big difference between promoting equality and tackling and challenging racism.

23. And we would challenge this Committee to itemise the expenditure the government spends in sport on minority ethnic sport and sports clubs that are ethnically based?

24. We know that the participation of minority ethnic communities is affected by the following:

- Racism/discrimination in the classroom, school and playground;
- The lack of positive role models;
- The lack of safe playing environments;
- The unwillingness of institutions to act quickly and swiftly in tackling discrimination on off and around the playing arenas ;
- The cultural aspirations of individual families for their children's future;
- The cultural and religious beliefs of communities, and the failure of sports organisers to adapt and amend their practices;
- The constant battle young minority ethnic people face between eastern and western aspirations;
- The unwillingness by institutions to accept that participation is more important than their view that specific events for specific communities is 'apartheid';
- The unwillingness by sporting institutions to accept that to encourage participation by minority ethnic communities involved challenging and combating racism and discrimination and to foster an environment of safe playing arenas for such communities.

25. We know that a government sponsored programmes to combat racism and challenge discrimination sends a message to individual and communities that such behaviour is unacceptable. If this is then coupled with those organisations responsible for sports and their governing bodies taking the issue seriously, having procedures to tackle issues quickly, effectively and with the power to impose penalties, the battle to improve minority ethnic participation is half way there. The problem is a lack of leadership, and unwillingness to accept that racism exists, and organisations who hope the matter will go away even when it is raised with them.

26. We would be very willing to attend and answer any question the committee may have in respect of our contribution.



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