

Tackling Racism and Racial Inequality in Sport, Physical Activity and Active Lives in Greater Manchester

18th February 2021



Overview

GM Moving leads, supported by GreaterSport, convened a conversation on 'tackling racism and racial inequality in physical activity and sport' on

Facilitated by Eve Holt, Strategic Director, with introduction from Marilyn Comrie, Trustee at GreaterSport and founding member of the Black United Representation Network (BURN) in Greater Manchester.

The conversation was attended by 50+ individuals from a diversity of community groups and organisations across Greater Manchester. Approximately two thirds of participants were of African, Caribbean or Asian heritage or from a minority ethnic group.

Agenda and Aims

Future strategy: We want to ensure that our future GM Moving strategy is relevant to GM people and communities, in all their diversity, and that it goes further to tackle inequalities in Greater Manchester. We shared our thinking so far and sought feedback on the emerging priorities and approach. [You can find out more about our thinking so far here, including a 15min video which gives an overview on GM Moving and our direction of travel.](#) The current [GM Moving plan is available here.](#)

Workforce learning and development: We want to connect with organisations in Greater Manchester who would like to work with us to help us to grow and develop a more diverse, inclusive and equitable workforce in Greater Manchester and to widen access and participation in movement, physical activity and sport. We sought feedback on what good would look like in terms of both the what and the how.

Funding for community groups: We want to ensure that any funding available, to include the Sport England Tackling Inequalities fund, reaches the people and places that need it most to support ethnically diverse communities to be active during the pandemic. We shared information on how funding had been distributed to date and sought feedback and ideas for how this can best be distributed and used going forward.

Key questions addressed:

- 1) How are you feeling at the moment?
- 2) What are your priorities, the barriers, what needs to change?
- 3) What works well, what doesn't work well, who else needs to be in the conversation?
- 4) How can this have the biggest impact – what needs to be prioritised? How do we ensure funding reaches the people and communities that need it the most?

What we heard:

Below is a summary of what we heard, we've sought to cluster what we heard around the key themes that emerged in the conversation.

The Opportunities - what people said they want to see

Representation, leadership and decision-making

- Diversity is needed in senior leadership and governance structures.
 - Whilst some grassroots are diverse in some places at a local level e.g. cricket club in Alex Park, Moss Side / Whalley Range, this isn't reflected elsewhere and isn't represented at regional and national level
- Diverse representation matters - not just in 'equality and inclusion' roles
 - Learn from initiatives in football
 - 'Nothing for us without us'
 - Create a board which reflects the diversity of those we are assisting
 - Create groups that can lobby – create the dynamics that it takes to make change e.g. purchase buildings etc...need to speed up the processes
 - Have paid roles to enable people to participate rather than always expecting volunteers
 - Create a panel of representatives from the community – they shine a light
- A lot of bravery needed
 - More courageous conversations about race
 - Bold leadership and action wanted
 - Racism needs to be tackled head on and people need to feel safe.
- Need accountability
 - Improve monitoring and reporting
 - Manifesto – set out a baseline
 - Walking the talk
 - Clear steps we are taking forward
- Institutional problem – in 10 years' time want to see equality normalised in GM
 - A lot of sadness and anger, experiences of everyday racism in GM
 - Barriers to change are huge – people have been trying to tackle racism for generations
- Political interests and siloed working and bureaucracy get in the way
 - Want to see more long term planning and joined up working - need to join the dots
 - Cut the red tape - too much paper work.

Health

- Align health and wellbeing benefits of moving more with values and cultural norms
- View health as a holistic conversation across diverse groups
- Detach physical activity from weight loss
- Show the links between moving more and mental health and wellbeing, and with physical health, e.g. diabetes
- Prevention is better than cure

Physical environment

- Feeling safe is important
 - Particularly for women who want spaces that are culturally appropriate to exercise
 - Create safe walking spaces
 - Better lighting
 - Tackle street racism & hate
 - Dark in winter, need to adapt for this
- 'Start from where the community is – people won't travel'
 - Transport is really important
 - Important for older adults to get out across GM and visit other green spaces that don't exist in their area. Older adults from certain cultures do not travel to visit green spaces.
 - Cost of transport or perception of cost
 - Public transport is expensive, buses etc... Can't just jump on a train to take the family somewhere nice, too expensive.
 - Create more safe walking routes where people are – from your home
 - Need to understand the community, where they live and how to get through
 - A lot of what we're doing is a universal blanket approach, needs to be targeted
 - Perception of not being welcome or accepted in an unknown place, centre etc
 - Need to make opportunities for BAME
- Access to parks, green and blue spaces, public space and streets
 - 'People don't use the parks, there's no reason to go to the park'
 - 'Stop concentrating on the wrong parks'
 - Implement ideas about green space
 - Need to do the basics
 - Clean spaces
 - Toilets and benches are so essential
 - Lights for when it gets dark.

Facilities

- Training of staff in sport centres, leisure centres, eg make women feel more comfortable
- Need local wellness centres
- One-stop shop for information, in the community

Levelling up – investment, resources and amplification

- Lack of funding and resources
 - Levelling up conversation to elevate the grassroots orgs that are doing work and need to be acknowledged
 - Accessing infrastructure, whether it be purchasing facilities or renovating
 - Commissioning needs to change
 - Sustainable funding needed - longer term funding
 - Create a generational plan
- Funding in the right places – help community groups stay afloat
 - Grassroots investment needed e.g. pitches for football
 - Funding to support collaboration and shared learning, EDI development
 - Stop talking a lot, the money is out there, invest it, people are putting a lot of time to make things happen, need investment

- Pay advocates, give a budget for engagement, lack of resources otherwise
- There was a desire for community groups to collaborate together – encourage more joint bids
 - End the competitive funding processes which go against collaboration
 - Make physical activity element a part of funding bids regardless of what it looks like
- Funding for each locality
- Eradicate poverty, it's the fundamental reason for inequality. Creates complex pressures for women... need to unpick these challenges.
 - Funding for CYP, plan for poverty, food, holiday provision - Easter and summer – good comms to support

Collaboration and partnerships

- Building bridges across GM
 - Develop those links - collaboration across other groups
 - Greater relationships at local, neighbourhood level, shared spaces/assets,
 - Cross advocate and signpost for each other's orgs and agendas - eg. mental wellbeing, pathways to different sports
 - Collaborate across groups and orgs
 - Meeting today is a good example of convening people – do more
 - Shared objectives
 - Who knows about these spaces?
 - How do we reach groups
 - Need to pay people if not part of their day job

Engagement

- Support more young people to be involved
 - Work with young people at early age
- Don't over promise so communities become disheartened
 - There is generally a lack of action from consultations - leading to disengagement
 - We must stop meeting to say we've met, there's so much enthusiasm to get people to a meeting to participate, show their value by saying what happened with what they said
 - Don't just parachute in and out or fund such 'interventions'
 - We're not talking until we see action
 - Stop NGB's or local authorities just dictating and then consulting at the end
 - Recognise and take action to address barriers to engagement and participation - individual affordability & travel barriers

Activities

- Test and learn
- No one answer to help people move more, we must test and learn with different, diverse groups of people. Let's get active!
- Need multi-sports organisations and spaces
- More women only environments and women only staff and facilitators, scarf or not
- Support to be coaches, trainers etc across workforce and community
- Always looking at barriers to participation and trying to eliminate them – illuminate
- 2am sessions for shift workers
- Activities which enable engagement and widen access and participation

Key asks

- Take action, make change happen, less of the what – ‘Walk the talk’
 - Speed at which action is required
 - Follow up fast pace – opportunities to follow up, learn, connect
 - Cautious support and optimism from a group who has been consulted frequently but rarely meaningfully engaged and promises kept
 - Test and learn – hackathon? Enable people to have a go and implement – money attached
 - Share updates on funding, workforce, what happens next
 - Meet again, helpful to facilitate us coming together and creating a safe space / system like today to talk and collaborate.
 - Keen to arrange a meeting with Viveen at Sport England.
 - Share contact details with each other and crack on
- Pay advocates, champions, community organisations to do this work, they make things happen, have trust, relationships and understanding of their community
 - Support the workforce here and now – capacity build organisations
 - Don't lump ethnically diverse "BAME" groups together and recognise the micro level of the really diverse groups we have across GM
 - Grow understanding of intersectionality: where race, class, gender and other personal characteristics interplay. For example, poverty creates ‘complex pressures’ for black women, there is a need to unpick the specific challenges presented by the intersection of poverty, race and gender.
 - Not one size fits all in terms of support.
 - Immediate conversations with participants.
- Bringing other partners together – governance and capacity building
 - Brokering relationships e.g. with funders, local authorities, other groups with common goal, grow peer support between people (pan GM or locality). Pairing NGBs with community groups. Build relationship on 1:1 level, and invite into strategic pan-gm spaces
 - Take this conversation into other rooms as allies, anti-racist voices to challenge
- Need physical spaces – buildings not just having to rely on other people's spaces and buildings. Community hubs

What works well – case study

Bollyfit

- Run fitness sessions for women. Set up herself because sick of lack of women only environments... e.g. previous experiences of having to wear a hijab for the whole of a training day because there were no female instructors
- Got people coming through for volunteering and getting involved
- Has funding now for 3 coaches
- Use churches, halls and local community spaces
- If you've been a victim of racial abuse, get space and support to speak out, become a representative
- Key messages:
 - Stark health inequalities in South Asian communities
 - The best way to get groups is to support them to see its their responsibility to get people moving
 - Educate – show how activity impacts every aspect of a person life
 - Show ways to move at home, spend most of our time at home. We adapt to our parents and family norms, need to design in to life at home
 - Small pot of funding and limited amount of time - good GMM has the aspiration to look at this in depth.
 - See what can be added on as support for existing groups, partnerships.
 - Need to focus on the 'what's in it for me' ...not about putting health and activity in silos, it needs to be part and parcel