Consultation with Minority Ethnic Communities on Sport & Physical Activity

Background
In December 2009, Sport Wales undertook a consultation exercise as part of the development process towards a single equality scheme. It was recommended that Sport Wales conduct further consultation with minority ethnic communities to better understand some of the perceived barriers to participation in sport and physical activity, and the needs of specific groups. In response to this, Sport Wales has collaborated with the (Cardiff Communities First) Ethnic Minority Communities Programme to conduct a scoping study of target communities living in Cardiff.

Objectives
The research objective was to undertake consultation with minority ethnic groups that would inform Sport Wales and the sport sector of:

- The barriers to participation and progression in sport and physical recreation. This relates to both cultural barriers and organisational barriers.
- Perceptions of sport and physical recreation with respect to minority ethnic communities and cultural groups.
- The needs of minority ethnic communities and cultural groups and any trends towards specific activities.

Method
A scoping study was conducted with small groups targeting no more than 12 participants per session. Representation from a range of ethnic and faith groups were sought to ascertain how ethnicity and/or faith could impact on perceptions and participation in sport and physical activity. Each group was facilitated by [Communities First] Ethnic Minority Communities Team (EMC) staff.

Sport Wales with the EMC Team, identified three interest groups namely:

- Female physical activities group – including groups that run physical and recreational activities as part of their social programme.
- Sports group – such as football and basketball clubs.
- Displaced people (individuals seeking asylum and recent refugees).

The named groups were questioned on their participation in sport and physical activities and if and how the participants’ ethnicity, culture, faith and citizen status impacted on access and participation. Because of the limited numbers participating in the study, this report does not suggest that it is a comprehensive representative view of all minority ethnic communities resident in Cardiff; however the experiences, issues raised and recommendations do provide some insight and understanding of barriers and perceptions of minority ethnic individuals and groups.

This report highlights some significant findings which lead us to conclude that a broader consultation exercise should be undertaken to further investigate the topics highlighted within this report, engaging more communities.

Each participant was asked to complete a simple tick box questionnaire to gain some quantitative data around participation in sport and physical activities and club/group membership.

This exercise was followed by a discussion to gain qualitative data on each individual’s personal experience and perceptions of accessing and their involvement in sports or physical activity.

November 2010
The following questions were asked:

- Do you have any specific cultural/faith based needs when considering your participation in sports/physical activities?
- Are there any barriers to you participating in sports/physical activities that are specific to your culture, faith, community?
- How do you feel that these barriers can be overcome?
- Do you attend a cultural or faith based centre to engage in your activity?
- Does your club/group apply for or generate funding to support the team activity?
- Do you feel that you have the same opportunities as ‘white’ or other ethnic groups to progress as an individual?

EMC Programme staff recorded the responses and compiled notes for this summary report.

Findings

Female physical activities group. Participants: 6
All participants in this group attend or have attended community or faith specific groups although not exclusively. Three participants have also organised sessions promoting healthy physical activity within their local communities for both young and older women.

Access & Participation

- Many leisure and youth centres are perceived as male friendly spaces. The accessible nature of an activity and/or venue is important and likely to influence the level of sustainable participation. The participants with a strong faith identity (in the context of this group, Muslim) were also more likely to be involved in activities with their female peers and children. However, it is worthy of note that this did not correspond with all [Muslim] participants’ experiences or expectations.
- Hindu participants stressed the emphasis in their community on mixed gender and intergenerational activities. Many activities catered towards family involvement with activities arranged (in some cases) by older members of the community. These activities were supported by social networks rather than formal provision.
- The desire for ‘safe-space’ (female rather than faith based) will contribute to increased participation by minority ethnic females especially communities with ‘strict’ rules about mixed gender activities.
- Mixed changing rooms (such as those at the Western Leisure Centre and Sports Village Swimming Pool were off putting for some, and ‘no-go’ for others.
- Consistent attendance by female participants can be affected by other responsibilities and priorities. It was stated that some women would be perceived as turning up late for sessions while their perspective could be that they were fitting in exercise when they can. Again this relates to the family being priority.
- Responsibilities to families and child-care were identified as both potential hindrances to participation or solutions to enable participation in healthy physical activity.
- Investment in the community was cited as a way to target non participants and to ensure sustainability of activity. There seems to be consensus that activity was more likely to be taken up if it was offered within the community.
- Younger females are attracted to a wider spectrum of activities, even by those perceived by the outside world as ‘traditional’ (based on their attire) e.g. Muslim females who wear a burka. Kickboxing was cited as an area of interest, so was swimming.
- While access to resources and funding is priority for groups seeking to develop activities many Muslim groups do not apply for Lottery grants, as the funds are generated by gambling.
- Some (mainly Muslim) participants do not listen to particular types of music/instrumentation so will not attend classed or centres playing unsuitable music.
General comments in relation to overcoming some of the barriers:

Provision of more women only sessions, programmed at different times to meet varied needs of those women that work or have family responsibilities. This would ease the overcrowding that occurs when limited sessions are available.

Provision of more activities for children, particularly girls only aged 10 plus in local centres as opposed to youth clubs. Provide more ‘all female’ focused activities throughout the summer holidays.

Equality impact-assess services and sessions to ascertain possible barriers to participation and negative impact.

For individuals for whom English is not the mother tongue, loud music in classes can hamper the ability to comprehend and follow instructions. Some (mainly Muslim) participants do not listen to particular types of music/instrumentation so will not access classes playing unsuitable music.

Consult with communities, and do not assume activities will appeal to all people of a particular ethnic/faith background.

Sports Group. Participants: 5 male
All of the participants were involved in sports groups (football and basketball). Two coached football, another basketball. One participant was a football scout. All played in or are involved in teams that have majority minority ethnic membership. While all spoke of their own experience much discussion time was given to the [under] development of young talent from minority ethnic communities.

Access & Participation
- The attitude of centre staff is cited as positively or negatively impacting on membership and attendance/use of facilities. Cultural awareness training for all centre staff was suggested.
- There is a perception that some centres are too interested in balancing their books than providing appropriate customer services. An assessment of minority ethnic community use of facilities was recommended.
- There are a number of football leagues where teams with minority or majority minority ethnic membership are able to participate. It was felt that both formalised and informal leagues (semi-pro and amateur) have visible BME involvement.
- There is a shared perception that many minority ethnic young males are very active in sport; some excel. However this is not reflected in the makeup of older sports teams. Talented and occasionally ‘outstanding’ young minority ethnic sporting talent is not recognised or nurtured (it is also suggested that ‘postcode’ and social-economic background hampered progress).
- Where there is very little minority ethnic representation in Welsh sport (e.g. basketball) teams have experienced discrimination from organisers and officials.
- While many young people are successful in their own schools and communities this does not translate into the transition into affiliated clubs; this can be down to a number of factors including:
  - Children and young people feeling isolated and out of their comfort zones, this can be exacerbated if the person is from a poorer (sometimes stigmatised) locality or school.
  - Parents/guardians aren’t always able to travel or support their children due to economic factors or other family responsibilities and priorities.
  - Clubs don’t often understand or cater for children and young people with ‘additional’ support needs. Cultural or faith needs may not be understood.
General comments in relation to overcoming some of the barriers.

Sports opportunities need to occur in the community, maybe satellite NGB clubs could be established more locally.

Resources to identify and nurture talent from poorer areas are needed. Particularly talent being recruited from local community clubs.

Affiliated clubs need to understand better the needs of BME community groups, and need to reach out to them.

More resources need to be allocated to appropriate groups such as schools and youth/community centres in specific communities that can support young talented BME individuals and sports team of all ages. Some participants clearly stated that they are in a better position and have the acumen and credibility to provide appropriate support and provision in their community if resourced.

More diversity of staff at Sport Wales and other sporting bodies to change culture of exclusion. (This could relate to role models).

Talent ID processes need to work with local community groups.

Displaced People (Refugees and those seeking asylum).
Participants: 7

All of the participants are involved in playing and/or organising sports teams. The participants are male with five of Central African heritage. Two are of Arab North African and Middle East heritage.

Access & Participation

- People seeking asylum have very limited resources; sport has a role for enabling social networks.
- Especially for children there is the perception that there are fewer opportunities for engaging in a wide range of physical activities and sport in schools. It is felt that particular schools focus on specific sports rather than creating opportunities for children and young people to try a range of activities.

- There is a strong perception that children who have migrated to Wales are not considered within Welsh sport as ‘Old boys networks’ and ‘class structures’ are seen as a barrier to the inclusion of new population groups. A comparison was made with the French national football team which has visible ‘migrant’ population representation.
- Refugee teams experience challenges to accessing sponsorship. It is felt, due to the media stigma attached to refugees and asylum seekers it is harder to gain support therefore getting funds for equipment and sports kits is a problem.
- Some teams cannot access leagues as they are not affiliated to a recognised club. Affiliation to a club means that teams have changing rooms and shower facilities, however this comes at a cost which cannot be met by many.

General comments relating to overcoming some of the barriers.

Sports advisors for refugees and RCO’s (Refugee Community Organisations) are tapping into reserves of talent, Organisations such as the Welsh Refugee Council, Displaced People in Action and some smaller RCO’s have access to people who have played and coached sports. These individuals can be developed into a resource to talent spot and support sports development.

The asylum process was described as a ‘psychological prison’. Sports and activities can be used to help people create or broaden their social networks and integrate with others (develop social cohesion) and develop broader interests. WAG Inclusion Strategy states that “integration starts at day 1” sports can be used to encourage and promote social integration and tackle the stigma of “asylum seeker” and “refugee”.

Recommendation and final conclusion

This report outlines the findings from a scoping study from a small sample of different minority ethnic communities based in Cardiff. The experiences, issues raised and recommendations provide some insight and understanding of barriers and perceptions of minority ethnic individuals and groups. Further work should be undertaken to explore these issues with a wider range of communities. These initial findings and future work should be shared with Sport Wales staff and partners.