

Football as a Tool for integration

Refugee Week Conference 2019 Workshop

Notes by Pete Churchill

Chair: Susie Murphy, Positive Youth Foundation

Contributors:

Kevin Coleman, Equality and Diversity Manager FA

Cormac Whelan, Positive Youth Foundation Football Programme

Maggie Murphy, Equal Playing Field

Kevin Coleman, FA:

- People think FA all about Premier League, there are actually 50 regional FAs across the country
- Role is enforcing rules, safeguarding, health and safety, developing the game, providing coaches
- Many of the big players are running projects which promote integration e.g. FIFA, UEFA, Amnesty International, the EU, Positive Youth Foundation
- Amnesty and FA are working together to support refugee women and girls' participation in football
- Clubs can be nervous about getting involved in something that could be seen as political
- FA run specific projects, for example they have built a couple of football grounds in a refugee camp in Jordan and sent over football kit to players in refugee camps
- Kevin's role in FA is to share good practice among all linked organisations
- 40 players in top four leagues have refugee backgrounds

Cormac Wheelan, Positive Youth Foundation:

- Began football sessions primarily with local youths who were mainly Syrian
- PYF run seven strands of activity of which football is one
- User-led approach, participants began to invite mates and to steer the project a bit
- Use football as a hook because young people love it. Through this PYF get to know the young people and can try to get them engaged in other activities such as volunteering and employment
- Helps young people feel part of their new city
- In Refugee Week 2019 PYF are organising an all nations 5-a-side cup, last year they had 23 countries represented, local Coventry-born kids take part as well. This year developing the event by having a female tournament as well

Maggie Murphy, Equal Playing Field

- Sport has a universal reach and football the biggest game of all sports, but 50% of the population is deprived of opportunities to be involved

- Sport is linked to many other areas like education, health, leadership, growth of confidence, way into community and friendships, and all these things shouldn't be denied to girls
- Once women and girls do get involved they get the raw deal – poor pitches, the worst referees, kits that don't fit
- Issue of abuse – verbal abuse, sexual abuse (e.g. of women players in Afghanistan)
- Maggie is involved in positive action to raise profile of women's football – big stunts like playing football at highest and lowest points on the planet
- Women's World Cup in France this year – hoping for longest game of football ever
- Basic mission is to make women's football unexceptional - a girl kicking a girl around the park should be allowed to be just as rubbish as a boy – it shouldn't only be for exceptionally talented