



CONFERENCE REPORT



Equality

Rights

Together

TRUST **UNITY**

COMMUNITY

Policy

Asylum

CONVERSATION

Mental
Health

Faith

CONFLICT

Identity

IMMIGRATION

Inclusion

BELONGING

VALUES

Fairness

*Safe
Spaces*

Borders

HOUSING

COHESION

STATUS

OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We need to create, promote and fulfil an alternative narrative, one that acknowledges and commits to anti-racism and calls out racist rhetoric for what it is. Furthermore, understanding of why such racism persists and the effects it has needs to be more explicitly discussed. Reasoned debate needs to be informed by the lived experiences of racialised others and actioned for universal benefit.

It is time to hold those in power to account. If civil society, the Third Sector, Voluntary and Community Organisations, or any other non-governmental category, are to be responsible for delivery, they must also be given the resources and encouragement to speak truth to power, with the ultimate aim of resetting the moral code within the Governing elite.

Disenfranchised people and communities need support in finding legitimate ways to make those in power listen to their concerns. This includes racialised minorities whose existence is effected by persistent narratives of unbelonging and those living with social, cultural and economic deprivation.

Investment is needed in developing and supporting community leaders who are able to accurately and responsibly represent and express the views and needs of their communities, whilst understanding and respecting other perspectives.

There is a need for a better understanding of youth and community engagement work and the evidence that can support it. Targeted measurement can provide a hard evidence base for supporting such work but must not ignore the soft, long-term outcomes, which are rooted in longstanding philosophical arguments for the common good. In part, the latter needs to more strongly reaffirm the value that society places in the work of social and civic engagement professionals – especially in understanding what youth and community work achieves and the means through which it does so.

Support is needed for bringing different communities together as part of the ordinariness of daily life. There are structural challenges that will only be overcome through investment in service provision. Additionally, there are cultural challenges that can be managed through support for community organisations with the appropriate infrastructure to embed social cohesion within their existing work.

Those working within the football industry, whether in administrative, managerial, coaching, media or commercial roles **need to be better equipped to acknowledge, engage with and talk about difference.** More diverse representation is crucial as is training and support for those in the industry who are able and willing to show leadership in challenging vocal minorities. If football clubs want to be taken seriously as representatives of local civic identity, they must engage responsibly with local and national politics and be encouraged to regularly provide more authoritative messaging that speaks to local audiences from different ethnic and economic backgrounds to support social cohesion.

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In the summer of 2024, sparked by the circulation of misinformation about a tragic incident in Southport but more importantly the consequence of increasing support for far-right perspectives, towns and cities across England were the sites of rioting.

There were no riots in Sheffield, but the consequences of disorder elsewhere were closely felt by FURD, an organisation working on issues of racism, equality, cohesion and community relations for 30 years in the South Yorkshire region. Clients and contacts from local communities felt their presence in this country come under threat and some of the most vulnerable suffered physical attacks.

Feeling the need to respond to what happened, and fill a space that others were not, FURD hosted the conference, **“Uniting our Streets and Communities”**, to support debates and action on the urgent issues that the disorder of 2024 revealed. The conference was convened at what community practitioners saw as a crucial juncture with the aim of promoting meaningful dialogue and to seek solutions for rebuilding trust, unity, and understanding between communities. It brought together political, community and faith leaders. Practitioners, poets and people from diverse communities presented their thoughts and emotionally recalled the feelings evoked by the events of the

previous summer. The full programme can be seen in Appendix 1 but in summary the conference consisted of a number of panel discussions on the following topics:

- **What happened this summer? Unpacking The Riots**
- **Policy perspectives: What needs to change?**
- **Restoring Trust: How does a community build trust?**
- **Working with young people**
- **Using Sport as a tool for cohesion**

Themes that emerged across the discussions can be summarised as:

- **Normalisation and Individualisation of Racism**
- **Legitimate Concerns and Political Accountability**
- **Belonging and the communities left behind**
- **Community Role Models and Diverse Leadership**
- **Long-term Commitment and Investment in Services**
- **Misinformation, Trust and Solidarity**
- **Reaching Different Audiences and Challenging the vocal minority**

This report is based on the presentations and discussions that took place during the conference. It is informed by FURD’s 30-year history of anti-racist, youth and community engagement work.

We see this as a vital response to recent events and provide a number of suggestions as to next steps. This document is supported by our position paper on youth, sport and social cohesion (forthcoming).

Family Outing to see the Far Right

I don't watch the news.

A curated feed that my government prescribes I should see.

To scare me.

*To tell others how and what to think of me.
That I am a citizen but not quite a citizen.
That I should live in fear, that you, a proper citizen, should be scared of me.*

My father came to your country to steal your father's job. He came to convert you all to his religion. Apparently.

And so the Media continues: Know your place. You're brown, you're Muslim. We'll lay every wrong at your door.

And because of one such wrong, the far right are coming for you. Again. The media's complicity in this round of racist riots is there for all to see. Their lies are the fuel that feed this fire. A fire that will burn for days and terrify law abiding citizens all over this home of the commonwealth...

Mamie Shafi (poet)

1. NORMALISATION AND INDIVIDUALISATION OF RACISM

In the immediate aftermath of the riots in August 2024, FURD carried out a survey with service users and members of the local community.

One of the most striking, repeatedly cited responses from people identifying as from Black or Asian heritage was how scared they felt going about their daily activities and that they felt unsafe out on the streets. Their sense of dread was likened to feelings more prevalent some thirty or forty years ago.

Back then, racism amongst the population, borne out of ignorance and fear of the cultural other, was politically endorsed by the likes of Enoch Powell but was beginning to be challenged by appropriate policymaking that recognised the importance of multicultural futures in the UK.

Now, the promotion of the 'hostile environment' for migrants, particularly those seeking asylum, is seen by many as re-legitimising and implicitly promoting racial prejudice from within the very top levels of Government over recent years. For all the progress in legislation and education, latent forms of racism have become normalised once more to the extent that bigotry became manifest in verbal and physical

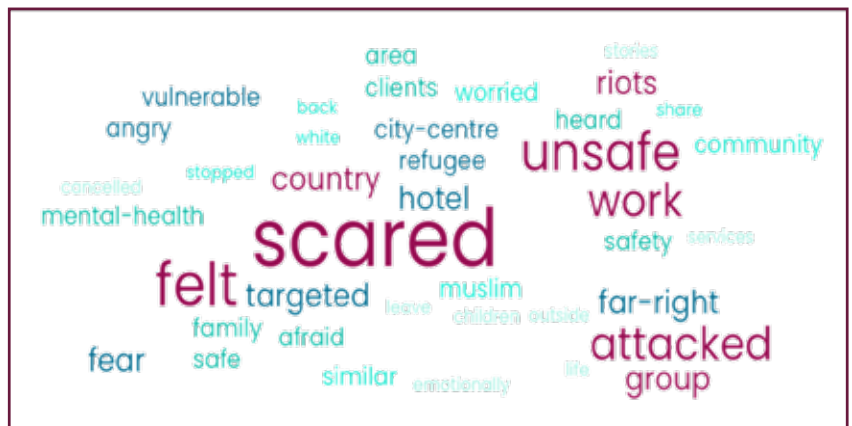


I REFUSED TO LET MY CHILDREN GO TO SCHOOL AS I WAS SCARED THEY WOULD BE ATTACKED FOR BEING MUSLIM."

FURD Survey Respondent
– British Muslim

attacks, not just in the form of rioting but in everyday encounters that were more far-reaching than the 30 official incidents of disorder across the country.

Whilst the incoming Government at the time acted swiftly to prosecute and punish the perpetrators involved in rioting, the effect of doing so is to individualise the racist motives and ignore the systemic inequality, both economically and culturally, which has gone unchallenged and thus legitimises racially motivated divisions. Furthermore, the community cohesion response that was the result of learnings from previous race riots of 2001



remains too simplistic because although social contact is crucial, in our media saturated world racist messaging from right-wing political voices has greater indirect influence than those from ethnic minority communities and their liberal moderate supporters.

We need to create, promote and fulfil an alternative narrative, one that acknowledges and commits to anti-racism and calls out racist rhetoric for what it is. Furthermore, understanding of why such racism persists and the effects it has needs to be more explicitly discussed. Reasoned debate needs to be informed by the lived experiences of racialised others and actioned for universal benefit.

2. LEGITIMATE CONCERNS?

In the aftermath of the riots, there emerged a narrative that the violence was an expression of people's legitimate concerns about their lives. Time and again, it was reiterated that the rioting was not initiated as a consequence of socio-economic dissatisfaction and a form of political protest. It was acknowledged that whilst those involved may well have



I WAS BULLIED BY PEOPLE AND ASKED TO GO BACK TO MY COUNTRY.”

FURD Survey Respondent
– Black African Muslim



WE’VE GOT TO REDOUBLE OUR EFFORTS TO TACKLE HATE AND TO TACKLE THE UNDERLYING CAUSES.”

Abtissam Mohamed
– MP for Sheffield Central

legitimate concerns the violence that took place was not a legitimate form of expression and the targeted hatred of Muslims and asylum seekers was the consequence of far-right agitators building on years of political ignorance to Islamophobia and redirection around forced migration.

It is important to be honest about the riots of 2024 and the causes for them. The ‘legitimate concerns’ narrative was not justification for what happened but began to override and give political credence to the far-right led, anti-migrant, fundamentally racist and Islamophobic justification for violence.

That lots of people in this country face systemic discrimination. That one in six people live in poverty and that we have long-term intergenerational poverty. The decimation of the public realm and loss of community infrastructure. These are legitimate concerns. They are issues facing families from diverse communities. Migration may be a legitimate concern, but not when it is disingenuously presented as overwhelmingly connected with ‘small boats’ and seeking asylum, which targets a small percentage of the most



vulnerable migrants as problematic and overexaggerates their numbers in the public imagination¹, whilst allowing that to feed into longstanding xenophobia about more established ethnic minorities.

If the riots show that people have legitimate concerns about the consequences of years of under investment and increasing economic inequality, the Government need to respond to those issues. They must also address the root causes of the violence by understanding that they are responsible for fuelling division within our communities as those who are most in need of support are encouraged to blame one another and longstanding antipathies are maintained through racist rhetoric instead of being addressed.

It is time to hold those in power to account. If civil society, the Third Sector, Voluntary and Community Organisations, or any other non-governmental category, are to be responsible for delivery, they must also be given the resources and encouragement to speak truth to power, with the ultimate aim of resetting the moral code within the Governing elite.



THIS WAS NOT 'PROTEST'. IT WAS FAR-RIGHT HATE AND THUGGERY PLAYING OUT ON OUR STREETS. ANTI-MUSLIM HATE AND ANTI-MIGRANT HATE. THIS WAS NOT PATRIOTS DEFENDING THEIR COMMUNITIES. THE FAR RIGHT TAPPED INTO ENORMOUS RESERVOIRS OF DISCONTENT. PEOPLE THAT WERE SUFFERING AFTER 14 YEARS OF UNDERFUNDING FOR THEIR COMMUNITIES."

Tom Hunt
– Leader of Sheffield City Council

3. BELONGING AND THE COMMUNITIES LEFT BEHIND

One of the key social components of social cohesion is a sense of belonging – alongside homogeneity of values and attitudes towards diversity². Belonging is multidimensional, working at the interconnected personal, communal, cultural, national and international levels. Individual perceptions of belonging, within a local community, through common values and interests, to a particular nation or across borders, intersect with





“**WE NEED TO HAVE GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY, WITH THE STATE TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE AREAS THAT IT CAN RESOLVE. WE CANNOT CONTINUE SCAPEGOATING MINORITIES FOR PROBLEMS IN SOCIETY.”**

Abtissam Mohamed
– MP for Sheffield Central

other individuals’ and groups’ hospitality towards one another, national policies and cultural discourses.

Individuals from many different communities have lost their sense of belonging, at various levels, but particularly in terms of feeling represented within national debate. Recent Governments have exploited the ‘hierarchies of belonging’³, which they have contributed to creating, turning those at the most deprived base against one another so that the lack of affordable housing or local services, for example, are blamed on high migration – a topic itself that is conflated with seeking asylum.

So, in addition to minoritised ethnic communities lacking a sense of belonging due to racist rhetoric normalising everyday racism, deprived white communities also lack a sense of belonging due to being marginalised within national discourse and political service. Envious of the internal

bonds within Muslim communities, built around faith and kinship, there is the risk of seeking belonging in far-right groups, particularly online, in the absence of other assets within ‘their’ community. We are once again at risk of reinforcing the ‘parallel lives’ paradigm that sees our geographical communities split by ethnic and cultural division.

Social cohesion is about more than just ‘social mixing’. It is giving voice to marginalised communities who share similar concerns and whose shared values exist in the democratic process and an egalitarian social contract, rather than cultural history. It is also about creating shared histories in the present, seeking solidarity in challenging a common oppressor as community services are either removed or reformulated to be the responsibility of the community themselves. That is not to understate the importance of bringing people together through social rituals that are welcoming to everyone, whether that is football or a community forum, but is to recognise that representation across the diversity of this nation is not equal.

“**HAVING BEEN GIVEN LEAVE TO REMAIN IN THE UK AS A REFUGEE THREE YEARS AGO, ISSA RECEIVED NO HELP WITH HOUSING AND WAS SLEEPING ROUGH IN SHEFFIELD WHEN HE WAS ATTACKED BY WHITE FAR-RIGHT PEOPLE WHO SHOUTED RACIAL SLURS AT HIM... HE RAN FOR HIS LIFE. HE WAS ATTACKED AGAIN A FEW WEEKS LATER AND BECAME PARANOID: HE THINKS ANYONE WHO IS WHITE IS GOING TO ATTACK HIM. [AS PART OF] THE FURD BELONGING GROUP, HE PLAYS FOOTBALL ON WEDNESDAYS AND FRIDAYS: ISSA NOW HAS A FAMILY.”**

Issa Mohammed (through an interpreter)
– FURD Belonging Group

Disenfranchised people and communities need support in finding legitimate ways to make those in power listen to their concerns. This includes racialised minorities whose existence is effected by persistent narratives of unbelonging and those living with social, cultural and economic deprivation.



THERE WAS A LOT OF YOUNG WHITE PEOPLE SAYING, 'WE DON'T THINK LIKE THAT, IT'S NOT WHAT WE THINK [ABOUT MIGRANTS]...' BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE WAS A LOT WHO WERE SAYING THEY DIDN'T FEEL LIKE THEY HAD A SENSE OF BELONGING TO SOMETHING."

Khalid Hizam
– Youth & Community Worker
(N. Sheffield)



A SURVEY BY AN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY ABOUT MO SALAH⁴ SHOWED THAT BECAUSE OF HIS SIMPLE ACT OF WORSHIP WHEN HE SCORES A GOAL SHOWED A 17% DECREASE [IN ISLAMAPHOBIC HATE CRIMES] IN LIVERPOOL."

Mumin Khan
– CEO of the Abdullah
Quilliam Mosque

4. COMMUNITY ROLE MODELS AND DIVERSE LEADERSHIP

The argument, supported by indirect social contact theory, is based on the visibility and representation of positive role models across different cultural groups. This is an extremely public example, but the role model thesis is such that the production of diverse leaders can have a positive influence on social cohesion by encouraging tolerance and promoting understanding of difference. Role models do not have to have the cultural cache of a world-famous sporting superstar. They do need to build trust within the community alongside having the skills and confidence to develop respectful connections with others.

Against all advice from the police, as 70 far right agitators faced off against as many as 300 local community members, both Muslim and non-Muslim, who had rallied in defence of the Abdullah Quilliam Mosque in Liverpool, the mosque's Imam reached out to the potential rioters and has subsequently developed an ongoing dialogue – including the two groups going on a day trip to the beach together later that summer. This scholar of Islam showed understanding for someone with an alternative perspective and was acting on his religious teachings. Education and training must be encouraged to support community leaders from all backgrounds who can act as cultural intermediaries, horizontally across different communities and vertically to those with the power to make change.

If a combination of neo-liberal/Third Way politics and multicultural policymaking has led to communities themselves being held responsible for social cohesion it is critically important to invest in both the human resources and infrastructure within different communities. As the first woman of colour, and first Arab woman, to be elected to Parliament in Sheffield, Abtislam Mohamed speaks from experience of the predominantly monocultural makeup of political leadership and insists that more needs to be done to encourage diverse representation within political and policy making arenas.

This must be recognised at all levels of governance and across different communities so as to encourage productive debate within and across communities. **Investment is needed in developing and supporting community leaders** who are able to accurately and responsibly represent and express the views and needs of their communities, whilst understanding and respecting other perspectives.



YOU HAVE TO BUILD COHESION THROUGH LOCAL INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND RECOGNISE COUNCILS' LEADERSHIP IN DRIVING THAT."

Jamie Scudamore
– Chief Executive, Belong



SEVEN OUT OF TEN OF THE MOST DEPRIVED PARTS OF THE COUNTRY SAW RIOTING. THEY ARE NOT ONLY DEPRIVED BUT LACK SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE: PARKS, YOUTH CLUBS, LIBRARIES, PLACES FOR INTERACTION."

Taj Ali
– Journalist and Historian



challenges of the present, not as a way of placating dissenting voices but in recognition of the negligence that has been shown to communities suffering long-term deprivation. That does not necessarily mean reinventing the wheel but getting a better understanding as to what has worked in the past, learning from that and adapting appropriately for contemporary contexts.

It is frustrating for organisations that have built trusting relationships within their communities for many years to witness ever decreasing investment within the public sector and short-term funding cycles that leads to so much time concentrated on searching for and completing funding applications. They would argue that there is a need for a better understanding of youth and community engagement work and the evidence that can support it. Part of the problem is that funding is often reactive. It is provided in relation to certain 'problem populations' or as a consequence of significant anti-social events – such as the riots from the summer of 2024 (for which funding was made available to those Local Authorities that experienced disorder). As the saying goes, prevention is better than cure. However, when budgets are tight and funding scarce, having evidence to inform preventative measures is crucial.

5. LONG-TERM COMMITMENT AND INVESTMENT IN SERVICES

Likewise, the 'common goods' for all communities that have served a longstanding purpose in providing spaces that can aid interaction when managed appropriately need to be reimagined to be of value in the 21st Century. They also need reinvestment, particularly in areas facing severe deprivation.

Such investment needs to be strategically aligned with the needs of the populus now and into the future. Planning needs to be long-term, reactive to the speed of change where necessary, but in anticipation of challenges in the future. That needs to go beyond the five-year election cycle and be rooted in demographic change and informed understandings of predictable challenges. It must also respond to the



Showing something is the right thing to do can be a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Targeted measurement such as that undertaken by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) which examined correlations between youth club closures and existing datasets on education and crime⁵ or through Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis⁶ can provide a hard evidence base for supporting such work. This must not ignore the soft, long-term outcomes, which, even with such established economic measurements, are rooted in longstanding philosophical arguments for the common good. In part, the latter needs to more strongly reaffirm the value that society places in the work of social and civic engagement professionals – especially in understanding what youth and community work actually achieves and the means through which it does so.

“

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT DOESN'T DO PREVENTATIVE VERY WELL... BECAUSE IT'S HARD TO PROVE A NEGATIVE: 'WE WORKED WITH THIS YOUNG PERSON AND THEY DIDN'T STAB ANYONE!' IT'S NONSENSICAL. THERE IS [AN ARGUMENT FOR] VIRTUOUS INVESTMENT: INVEST IN THIS BECAUSE IT IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO.”

Paul Oginsky
– CEO, VIBE (National Youth Charity)

“

THE PROBLEM WAS RACISM, PREJUDICE AND HATRED. NOT MISINFORMATION.”

Sunder Katwala
– Director, British Future

6. MISINFORMATION, TRUST AND SOLIDARITY

One of the key factors in preventing greater disorder was the role of local people and positive community partnerships that could provide more accurate information that countered the messages being circulated on social media. Information exists in the interrelationships between its producers and its audience. Whilst the misinformation being spread about the details of the perpetrator of the Southport tragedy was a key factor, it relied on an audience that was ready and willing to believe and act on that (mis)information. An audience that had been primed by repeated negative messaging about migrants over a number of years and whose regard for authority had been waning due to misinformation coming from political circles that has legitimised racialised others as the cause for reduced access to public services.

As locations about proposed far-right activity were spread, negative reactions throughout communities being affected (particularly amongst the young people therein) were assuaged through counter-intelligence amongst community groups and the police working together, and the trust that community and youth leaders have through their long-term engagement work.

In total there were about 5000 people involved in the racist riots. Groups of 100 here and 100 there were enough to cause such fear amongst minoritised communities and individuals, fundamentally as a



consequence of more seemingly banal and latent forms of racism going unchallenged from the top down. There were far more people who came out in counter-protest against the threat of violence. Individuals who were moved to walk down the street and stand in solidarity outside the local Mosque, not because they are Muslim but because they did not want their community neighbours illegitimately held accountable.

This emotionally delivered statement from a member of the audience was the prelude to a question about political messaging

but it shows that in times of 'crisis' there is a strong commonly-held sense of feeling across, and about, difference. It is not, though, necessarily strong enough for it to be felt as a normal part of everyday life, particularly by those whose lived experience of their racialised identities is in opposition to dominant political discourse. It is also not strong enough to counter the feelings of helplessness experienced by those whose daily lives are defined by experiences of socio-economic deprivation, who are pitted against one another in competition for under-resourced support services.

So, whilst the solidarity that emerged across different communities evidences the



EVEN AS JOURNALISTS WE WERE RECEIVING A LOT OF MISINFORMATION AND LIKE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY WE WERE TRYING HARD TO VERIFY INFORMATION. MESSAGES ABOUT THE EDL OR FAR-RIGHT MARCHING IN DIFFERENT PLACES WHICH ANGERED THE BLACK AND ASIAN POPULATION IN THOSE AREAS AND MANY PEOPLE WERE COMING OUT ONTO THE STREETS. TO THEIR CREDIT, LOCAL PEOPLE DID A LOT TO CALM THINGS DOWN."

Taj Ali
– Journalist and Historian



potentiality surrounding social cohesion, the racist riots of the summer shows that anti-racist and community cohesion work in its present guise has, to some extent, lost its effectiveness in the face of restructured right wing political perspectives and far-right networks. This is in part due to persistent cuts in service provision and lack of appropriate support for communities facing multiple challenges in terms of deprivation.

It is necessary to realise that far-right political attitudes remain that of the minority but also to remain vigilant in preventing and challenging the mainstreaming of such attitudes and not be complacent about such views going unchecked. This applies to all sectors within society, including National Government, local authorities, civil society organisations, community groups and the commercial world.

Support is needed for bringing different communities together as part of the ordinariness of daily life. There are structural challenges that will only be overcome through investment in service provision. Additionally, there are cultural challenges that can be managed through support for community organisations with the appropriate infrastructure to embed social cohesion within their existing work.



IF WE HAVE ARRIVED AT THIS POINT, AFTER ALL THE WORK WE HAVE BEEN DOING IN COMMUNITIES FOR YEARS AND YEARS AND YEARS... THERE'S SOMETHING THAT WE'RE DOING THAT'S NOT LANDING IN THE CORRECT PLACE, SO WE HAVE TO THINK ABOUT DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY."

Ewan Roberts
– Head of Asylum Link, Liverpool



7. REACHING DIFFERENT AUDIENCES AND CHALLENGING THE VOCAL MINORITY

In the weeks leading up to this conference, for example, the Reform Party were clear in their messaging about family, community and country. Drawing on nostalgic discourses of a time when in the public imagination, these three interlinked institutional concepts were indicative of a stronger, prosperous national economy and industrial past. Common enough tropes which often focus on shared national identity but fail to acknowledge the politics of deindustrialisation and resultant social, geographical and economic inequalities and inequities. Hidden within the idea of a shared national identity is an implicit racialised identification rooted in a cultural heritage of colonialism.

For many years football clubs have been tasked with supporting targeted groups in their locales. This is in part a result of the social inclusion agenda

that has dominated sport for many years which targeted increasing participation amongst numerous groups facing barriers, including various ethnic minorities. Sport Development approaches have increasingly been supplemented by Sport for Development but there has been a lack of clear understandings around social cohesion and the role of sport in supporting it or not.

British Future's 'Shared Goals' report⁷ highlights the potential role of local football clubs in providing positive messaging around shared common identities. It also suggests that clubs need to be aware of their tendency to segregate their community engagement client groups from each other and from the fan base⁸. Fair Shot, a current programme of engagement by the Refugee Council⁹, aims to challenge that by working with professional football clubs and their fans to raise awareness and understanding about issues of forced displacement. It builds upon recommendations made by the FURD report, 'Football – A shared sense of belonging?'¹⁰ that suggested more could be done to use football as a way of engaging alternative audiences in positive messaging.

Progress has been made in terms of social inclusion and there is evidence, such as that provided by British Future, that social contact through sport can contribute to changing attitudes about ethnically minoritised individuals¹¹. The extent to which that provides long term change in the face of counter messaging is open to question. **Those working within the football industry**, whether in administrative, managerial, coaching, media or commercial roles **need to be better equipped to acknowledge, engage with and talk about difference**. More diverse representation is crucial as is training and support for those in the industry who are able and willing to show leadership in challenging vocal minorities.

Football clubs are unique in their relationship with a dedicated consumer base and local community. If they want to be taken seriously as representatives of local civic identity, they must engage

...Family Outing to see the Far Right

But what happened was real. Whole communities of people were scared to leave their homes, go into town, go to the supermarket much less go to meet the far right. This fear lingers like the smell of smoke after a bonfire night that doesn't end.

What binds us as a community is stronger than, greater than, what fuels their hate.

It shouldn't be my job to educate the thugs. It's an unwinnable war when the racist fire is stoked by politicians and fanned by the media.

Mamie Shafi (poet)



THE POLITICAL RIGHT TEND TO BE BETTER AT COMMUNICATING BASIC CONCEPTS."

Jamie Scudamore
– Chief Executive, Belong

responsibly with local and national politics and be encouraged to regularly provide more authoritative messaging that speaks to local audiences from different ethnic and economic backgrounds to support social cohesion.





FINAL THOUGHTS

Four months after the riots, the conference provided eloquently emotional responses and forthright suggestions from presenters and attendees alike. Distilling down an extremely complex set of circumstances to the core issues that emerged during the event, the following interlinked challenges need addressing:

- Reinvigorating and reinvesting in core community services including youth engagement work
- Providing an alternative narrative that overwhelms far-right rhetoric in favour of the positive aspects of migration, multi-cultural presence within our society and community cohesion that empowers community leaders in speaking truth to power and holding authorities to account
- Reimagining anti-racist approaches that are fit for purpose in contemporary society in tackling discrimination and inflammatory messaging within our communities and amongst the political elite

FURD PLEDGE

FURD is driven by a strong commitment to our community, young people and collaboration. With that in mind, the conference was concluded with a pledge to uphold the following:

- **We will not give up on our community**
Community includes all of us — our concerns, ambitions, and hopes. To come together in a common future, we must build and refine that future with an inclusive vision — it won't just happen on its own.
- **We will not give up on young people**
Young people are the future. They are diverse. White, Brown, Black, Asian, African, European, and from many other ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds — all of them are British. They need to see the future, and it's our job to help them do that.
- **We will continue to develop programmes that serve our communities**
Through activities, projects, and interventions, we aim to inspire, challenge, support, and respond to change.
- **We are committed to working with statutory authorities**
Whether at the local, regional, or national level, we will work with authorities to help shape our future, holding them accountable where needed.
- **We commit to working with you**
We pledge to communicate openly, advocate for partnership working, and collaborate with others to move toward a shared future — no matter how challenging or complex the path may be.

- (1) Ipsos (2024b) *Attitudes towards Immigration – Wave 17 (September 2024)*. Available at: <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2024-09/attitudes-towards-immigration-british-future-ipsos-september-2024.pdf>; British Future (2024) *Restoring trust in polarised times: Immigration in the new parliament - Findings from the Ipsos/British Future immigration attitudes tracker*. Available at: https://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Tracker-report.Wave17.Final_Embargo19.9.24.pdf
- (2) Baylis, I., Beider, H., & Hardy, M. (2019). Cohesive societies literature review. *The British Academy*. <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/cohesive-societies-literature-review/>
- (3) See Back, L., Sinha, S., & Bryan, with C. (2012). New hierarchies of belonging. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 15(2), 139-154. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549411432030>
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- (6) E.g. Goodspeed, T., Österman, C. & Lynch, N. (2024) *The Social Value of the OnSide Network of Youth Zones*. OnSide. Available at: <https://www.onsideyouthzones.org/content/uploads/2024/11/OnSide-SROI-Report-FINAL.pdf>; Stone, C. (2018) *EitC Working Futures & Premier League Works: Social Return on Investment Report*. Liverpool Hope University. Available at: <https://www.hope.ac.uk/media/SROI%20Report.pdf>
- (7) Puddle, J. (2024) *Shared Goals: The power of football clubs to connect diverse communities*. British Future. Available at: <https://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/British-Future-Shared-Goals.pdf>
- (8) This is highlighted by Stone (2025) in his discussion about fan philanthropy rather than fan activism and football's paternalistic approach to 'communities of need'. Stone, C. (2025) *Football, Community and Social Responsibility: Everton's 'Blue Family' and Sport at the Service of Humanity*. Routledge
- (9) See <https://www.fairshot.org.uk>
- (10) Stone, C. (2013) *Football – A shared sense of belonging?* FURD. See also Stone, C. (2022) 'Stadia of Sanctuary? Forced migration, flawed football consumers and refugee supporters clubs,' *Sport In Society*. 25(3):1-17
- (11) Often ethnically minoritised individuals are viewed as 'contingent insiders' amongst dominant majority groups. See Back, L., Crabbe, T. & Solomos, J. (2001) *The Changing Face of Football: racism, identity and multiculturalism in the English game*. Berg; Stone, C. (2022) "'We're the (global) North Bank...": Transnational fandom, forced migration and football consumption,' in N. de Martini Ugolotti & J. Caudwell (eds) *Leisure and Forced Migration: Lives Lived in Asylum Systems*. Routledge

APPENDIX 1: CONFERENCE RUNNING ORDER

9.00 – 9.45	Registration & Welcome	Moderators: Piara Powar (Fare network) Mirriam Walker- Khan (Sky Sports)
10.00 – 10.15	Welcome	Howard Holmes (Founder of FURD)
	Why are we here?	Mehrun Ahmed (FURD co-CEO)
	What are our young people are thinking?	Simon Hyacinth (FURD co-CEO)
10.15 – 10.55	What happened this summer? Unpacking The Riots	Taj Ali (Journalist) Victor Mujakachi (Assist - Sheffield and FURD Trustee) Councillor Tom Hunt (Sheffield City Council)
10.55 – 11.10	Keynote speech	Abtisam Mohamed (MP, Sheffield Central)
11.10 – 11.25	The view from our streets	Narimaan Shafi (Spoken word) Dami June (Poet) Izzy Asif (GBM Boxing Promoter)
11.25– 11.45	COFFEE BREAK	
11.45 -12.00	'We saw it all'	Abduallah and Issa Mohammed (Asylum seekers, FURD Belonging Group) Mumin Khan (Abdullah Quilliam Mosque)

12.00 – 12.40	Policy perspectives: What needs to change?	Shams Moussa (Tees Valley of Sanctuary) Sunder Katwala (British Future) Bilal Hussain (Runnymede Trust) Jamie Scudamore (Belong – The Cohesion and Integration Network)
12.40 – 13.00	The view from our streets 2	Khalid Hizam (Youth Support Worker) Wemmy Ogunyankin (Poet)
13.00 – 13.45	LUNCH	Cohesion board activity
13.45 - 14.25	Restoring Trust: How do communities re-build trust?	Rosie Tapsfield (City of Sanctuary UK) Abdou Sidibe (Paul Hamlyn foundation) Ewan Roberts (Asylum Link, Liverpool)
14.25 - 15.05	Working with young people	Paul Oginsky (VIBE - National Youth Charity, Liverpool) Simon Hyacinth (FURD) Dr. Will Mason (University of Sheffield)
15.05 – 15.25	COFFEE BREAK	
15.25 - 16.05	Using Sport as a tool for cohesion	Khalida Popal (Girl Power, Denmark) Dylan Handley (Rotherham United Community Trust) Dr. Chris Stone (FURD) Tom Hughes (Yorkshire Sport Foundation) Luke Stewart (Refugee Council)
16.05 – 16.35	In conversation	Prof. Kevin Hylton (Leeds Met University) Richard Caborn (Former UK Sports Minister) William Gaillard (French Political Scientist and formerly UEFA) Howard Holmes (Founder and Chair, FURD)
16.35 – 16.45	Closing Remarks & Follow-Up	Simon Hyacinth (FURD co-CEO)

