FURD BRIEFING NOTE FOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Promoting Community Cohesion, Social Integration and Belonging

ABOUT FURD

FURD is a nationally recognised organisation based in Sheffield with close to three decades of experience in community engagement. Our work is rooted in using sport —particularly football — alongside youth work, music, the arts, and open-access community spaces to build bridges across divides and foster a strong sense of belonging.

FURD has evolved to become a hub for strategic thinking and policy development on issues of community cohesion. In light of last summer's unrest across the UK and the more recent events in Northern Ireland, our mission has never been more urgent.

OUR APPROACH TO COHESION

FURD adopts a multi-dimensional, grassroots model of cohesion-building that is adaptable and replicable in communities across the UK. Our initiatives do not operate in isolation — they intersect to produce long-term social outcomes. Our work includes:

- **Sport:** Football and other sports activities designed for all ages and abilities. These sessions are safe, structured, and welcoming to everyone, particularly marginalised youth.

- **Creative and Cultural Expression**: Music, arts, and spoken word projects that enable young people to explore identity, belonging, and expression, as they develop valuable skills.

- **Community Drop-ins**: Inclusive spaces where local residents can access support, engage in dialogue, and connect across cultural and generational lines.

- **Cross-Community Dialogue**: Structured discussions and peer engagement sessions to build empathy, mutual understanding and collective problem-solving.

KEY OUTCOMES

Our model delivers community cohesion through:

- **Bringing People Together**: Programmes that build lasting relationships between individuals of different backgrounds, encouraging dialogue and shared experiences.

- **Developing Skills and Confidence**: Youth and community participants gain practical and emotional tools—communication, teamwork, leadership, and resilience.

- **Encouraging Collaboration**: By partnering with local schools, police, housing providers and voluntary organisations, FURD fosters shared ownership of cohesion challenges and solutions.

- **Providing Safe and Positive Environments**: All FURD spaces are designed to be accessible, trusted, and empowering—key to reducing conflict and isolation.

PRINCIPLES OF ACTION: FROM CONFLICT TO COHESION

For FURD the cohesion process begins by acknowledging and addressing conflict, creating shared spaces where open and inclusive conversations can take place.

Through conversation, we allow voices to be heard and shared understanding to develop. Trust follows, then action, where communities work together.

These efforts create cohesion — a sense of belonging, solidarity, and shared responsibility within a diverse society.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

With tensions rising in many areas of the UK, it is vital that policymakers look to models of inclusion and cohesion that are already delivering impact. FURD's programmes offer a scalable, community-first solution to some of the most urgent issues facing constituencies today.

A MODEL FOR YOUR CONSTITUENCY

The FURD approach is designed to be shared. Many of our initiatives — such as youth tournaments, intercultural dialogue workshops, or arts-led community projects — can be adapted to local needs with minimal cost and significant local buy-in.

We welcome the opportunity to work with MPs and local authorities to support or advise on replicating these practices within your constituencies.

For more information or collaboration opportunities, please get in contact.

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Joint CEO's FURD

USEFUL DEFINITIONS

1. Social Cohesion
The strength of relationships and sense of solidarity among members of a community. It includes trust, belonging, and shared values that hold society together.

2. Inclusion
Ensuring all individuals and groups feel respected, valued, and able to participate fully. It addresses barriers related to race, gender, disability, faith, and class.

3. Integration
A two-way process where newcomers and host communities adapt and interact. It fosters equal opportunity, shared identity, and mutual respect.

4. Belonging
A feeling of being accepted and valued within a community or society.
It underpins people's emotional investment in the places where they live.

5. Community Resilience
The ability of communities to withstand and recover from shocks or divisions. It is built through strong networks, participation, and shared purpose.

6. Polarisation
The process by which groups or opinions become more extreme or divided. It threatens cohesion by eroding dialogue, trust, and mutual understanding.