

Executive Summary

General

88 (96%) football clubs in the FA Premier League and the Football League responded to a postal questionnaire survey on clubs relationships with their local minority ethnic communities, which, included dealing with issues of racism.

Of these 88 clubs, 45 (51%) are situated in areas which have a minority ethnic population of 5% or more. 23 clubs (26%) are situated in areas where between 5% and 1.5% of residents are of minority ethnic background. The remaining 20 clubs (23%) are sited in areas where minority ethnic communities account for less than 1.5% of the local population.

All London clubs and three-quarters (75%) of all Midlands clubs are situated in areas which have substantial minority ethnic communities. Most FA Premier League clubs and most larger, urban-based, Football League clubs are sited in areas with significant local minority ethnic populations. More, smaller, Football League clubs are sited in largely 'white' areas.

Nearly, two-thirds (65%) of respondent clubs claim that they already *appeal to all members of the community* and one-third (33%) of clubs feel they are already 'successful' in *attracting black and Asian fans to matches*. However, according to supporter surveys, the actual level of 'active' minority ethnic support for most football clubs in England is probably between 0-2% of the total crowd. Most clubs which are sited in areas with substantial minority ethnic populations have very low proportions of these populations represented in their 'active' support.

60% of clubs in areas with large local minority ethnic populations admit they have *not* been successful at attracting minority communities to matches. Claims for 'successful' recruitment of minority ethnic fans on the part of some clubs seem to us to reflect more a relative lack of *ambition* among clubs on this score rather than real successes in this respect.

In general terms, London clubs and larger clubs in 'high' minority ethnic areas are rather more 'racially aware' and are more active on issues of opposing racism than are smaller clubs outside of the larger, urban areas. We detect a feeling at many clubs - especially smaller clubs - which are sited in largely 'white' areas that racism is not an issue that really need concern them at all. At some North West and Midlands clubs, which are sited in 'high' minority ethnic areas, responses to dealing with racism and to the issue of appealing more directly and more appropriately to minority ethnic communities seem very limited.

Racism and match attendance

Fan *concerns over racism* (32%) and also *cost* (33%) were the two most popular factors cited by football clubs as likely major *disincentives* for minority ethnic attendance at their own club matches. A number of football clubs also continue to view minority ethnic non-attendance at football matches in terms of familiar cultural stereotypes, such as the notion that minority ethnic groups *like other sports* (24%) or that their members are prevented from attending matches because of *religious and cultural factors* (11%). One in ten club respondents also thought minority ethnic fans *prefer to watch football on TV* (10%).

Three-quarters (76%) of all club respondents felt it unnecessary to *do more work specifically with black and Asian fans*. Over half (52%) of all clubs also felt they were *already open to all fans*. Clubs which claimed to be already *open to all fans* were also among those which seemed most often to be the least 'racially aware', and to be the least active in terms of being generally geared up to deal with racism if it occurred.

More than half (57%) of respondent clubs were unaware of any *recent incidents of racism* amongst spectators at their home matches. The implication here, that racism is simply not a problem at most football grounds, is rather challenged by fan experiences at clubs, as reported for example, in supporter surveys. Fewer clubs (41%) had taken any recent *direct action* against racist incidents at home matches.

Over three-quarters (77%) of all clubs informed supporters of the contents of *ground regulations* concerning how they would deal with racist abuse by *displaying statements* permanently and prominently around the stadium. Just over one-quarter (26%) of clubs conveyed this information to fans over the *PA system* prior to games.

Only eight clubs (9%) have *telephone hotlines* for fans specifically to report incidents of racism at the clubs matches, even though this approach was recommended by the government's own recent Football Task Force. Despite this relative lack of formal procedures for reporting racism at many clubs, 41 clubs (52%) had received recent *reports of racism* at home matches from fans.

Campaigning against racism

Almost three-quarters (73%) of all clubs claim to have worked with the national anti-racist organisation, *Kick It Out*, on *local campaigns against racism*. However, very few clubs adhered completely to all aspects of *Kick It Out's* own 'ten point plan' to guard against racism at football. Again, adoption of the 'ten point plan' by clubs was explicitly recommended by the Government's Football Task Force.

Impressively, seventy-nine clubs (90%) claim to have worked with at least one *partner organisation* on local projects against racism at football, although the nature, outcomes and effectiveness of these partnerships is unclear. Generally speaking, London clubs were consistently more likely to have worked with more partner organisations on projects of this kind than clubs in ‘provincial’ areas.

Seven clubs (8%) had *obtained funds* specifically to work at improving relations between local minority ethnic communities and the football club on an ongoing basis.

Players and administrators

About 10% of *young players* (14+) who are based in club *youth Academies* and *Schools of Excellence* are reported to be black. 1.6% of such players are reported to be of Asian origin. Most clubs now have some younger black players, but 13 clubs do not. Most clubs have *no* Asian youngsters on their books. The total estimated number of 71 young Asian players based at professional clubs, thirty of whom were concentrated at just six clubs, shows the continuing problem of recruiting young Asian footballers to professional football clubs.

According to our estimates based on club replies, about 13% of all *professional* players at FA Premier League and Football League clubs during the 1999/2000 season were UK born black players. This may suggest a slight fall recently in the recruitment of players from black British backgrounds, though the data here, over time, are probably not always completely comparable and reliable.

Minority ethnic *workers* are considerable under-represented in the *administrative departments* of professional football clubs. Only *two* minority ethnic employees, nationally, hold what one might describe as a *senior* administrative post at any of these 88 professional clubs.

The administrative *recruitment procedures* at a large number of football clubs seem effectively ‘closed’ to outside applicants, including members of minority ethnic communities. Many clubs (35%) still admit to using methods of ‘*word of mouth*’ or *personal contacts* in order to recruit senior administrative staff. This is likely to discriminate against applicants from minority ethnic backgrounds and it almost certainly helps to maintain a strongly ‘white’ senior administrative core in professional football.

Fewer than one-third (31%) of all clubs, according to our returns, have written *equal opportunities policies*, despite this being a specific recommendation of the Football Task Force. Furthermore, two out of three of those clubs which claim to have equal opportunities policies do not seem to *adhere* to these policies, at least in terms of their preferred or utilised administrative recruitment strategies. This means that most of those clubs which claim to have such policies do not properly use, or understand, them.

A small number of professional football clubs have worked hard at dealing with issues of racism at the local level. There has been real progress here. However, the responses of most professional football clubs to the implementation of anti-racism measures identified in the Football Task Force recommendations have, generally speaking, been much more limited. Only when working directly in conjunction with other football, or with non-football, agencies have some clubs been able to respond practically and reasonably effectively to the challenges set to them.

There remains, we would argue, at a significant minority of professional clubs, a distinct lack of effective dialogue with either their local minority ethnic communities or with relevant agencies which might have more knowledge of these communities and which might be in a position to offer advice on how better to ‘connect’ with local ethnic minorities. In some cases, lack of resources is likely to be a factor here. It is clear that amongst clubs such as these there is still a long way to go to match up to Football Task Force and other recommendations on social inclusion and dealing with racism.