Supplementary Evidence from Zanib Rasool MBE – CCE0267

The organisation I work for [Rotherham United Community Sports Trust] supports young people who do not attend school; many are excluded. We need to look at work with young people outside school in youth settings. Sadly many of those giving the most cause for concern are often not in schools.

As an organisation we are training up our sport coaches in youth work so they can engage with young people and fill in some of the gaps left by loss of youth service posts and closure of open access sessions for young people and detach youth work, as there is no one there to listen to young people on the margins.

Work with parents is vital as you learn from your parents rights and responsibilities, acceptable behaviour and many of our children across all communities don’t have those parents. A good example of this is with schools who are teaching children about healthy eating and having healthy school dinners and parents then undoing that work by giving them take-aways almost every night. I learned social responsibility and duty from my parents and working hard, they were Commonwealth immigrant who came here in the early 1960s.

Even though I am not a sports person myself I have found it is a good tool to engage young people. Over 12 months we have organised 23 football tournaments bringing teams across Rotherham and regionally together through our Kicks programme, an evening diversionary programme to reduce ASB. (Similar programmes are delivered across England by community football programmes like ours under the umbrella of English Football League Trust.) Football is a global game developed in England and we can engage men quickly through football even if they don’t speak a word of English, and we use sport as a hook to progress them on to other things like ESOL.

We run a grassroots football club called United 4 Communities with players from all backgrounds playing in a Sunday league, young players from Dinnington playing with young people of Asian backgrounds living in the town centre, they know they have to play as a team to win and that is the only reason that stops them from fighting each other. Through sports we engage them in education, volunteering and apprenticeships.

The Muslim women we are working with play netball every Saturday evening and have played two competitions with a women's netball team from Barnsley, and would not have otherwise met. We are now looking at putting them in regional competitions, some wear traditional clothes and the hijab, the clothes they wear are not important, it’s the participation and integration. Sport is a great tool to integrate all sectors of community.

I am just about to start my doctoral research in ESOL and I am finding there is a long waiting list for people wanting to learn English and that the English language learning provision is not adequately resourced. We must not also forget there are many people in white working class communities who cannot read and write.

We find poverty is a big divide and fragments communities as often people in white working class mining areas in Rotherham presume all the resources are going to minority community, and they feel they have been forgotten and often get drawn in to racist ideology as they don’t have any direct contact with other people so rely on the media.
The faith community is also doing some great work, a church near me has been running a mother and toddler group every Thursday for 30 years, all run by volunteers, it is attended by mum and toddlers from all background including my own nephew and that is the age we need to start. One of the Islamic centres in Rotherham hosted a Macmillan coffee morning and invited the care home residents next door to attend, it was lovely to see young people and the Imams serving tea and samosas.

My colleagues are currently working in another Mosque in Rotherham delivering health sessions to children and young people alongside their Quranic classes. They have an hour of their usual lessons and then an hour with our health team. The Mosques are slowly starting to follow the lead of the churches.

Muslim women especially are playing a very active role in Rotherham, my mentor who set up the first Asian women's organisation in Rotherham in early 1980s and now in her 70s is still running the centre accessed by many women from new arriving communities wanting to learn English. I think sometime in policy we are represented as passive and not engaged civically, and in reality in many cases it is the opposite.

We need to invest more in ESOL provision as there is high demand for it. More schools need to open their doors to parents learning on same site as their children so you create a family culture of learning.

We need to relook at the cuts in youth provision as youth workers did some great work around personal relationships, racism, the holocaust; the list is endless and there is only so much schools can do.

Sport funders perhaps also need to look at not only increasing participation in sport and making people healthier but also focus on community cohesion through sport and linking people together.