

## BAME Football Forum Media Release



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### **Reducing racist hate crimes in football low on County FA's agenda, says the BAME Football Forum**

The BAME Football Forum (BFF), who have consistently raised awareness of racism and discrimination in football; have said that their local football Governing body has no ambition to deal with the rising concerns around racism in football at a grassroots level.

The forum, who delivered a hugely successful event back in October of last year saw representatives from Kick It Out, Show Racism the Red Card, The National and Local FA, Crime Prosecution Services and the Police in attendance. The forum have said that their local governing body, the Leicestershire and Rutland County FA has no intention of actively seeking ways to reduce cases of racism with communities; and that as a body who governs football, they should have more accountability around proactively progressing the race agenda.

One of the anonymous experiences reported to the FA in their report [#ITSNOTFAIR](#), was from a child who played for an Under 13 team.

"I am 12 years of age and have been playing football in the league for 3 years. My team played an away fixture and 2 of the oppositions players kept gesturing the word 'Paki' to me, saying I don't belong in this country and should go back to where I come from. I told my coach who addressed it with the referee and the opposition coach, who came over and said his players are not racist. I told my parents who told me that I don't need to tolerate this sort of behaviour and that football should be enjoyed when played and that I should quit, so I did".

As part of the recommendations from their report [#ITSNOTFAIR](#), Experiences of grassroots racism, the forum asked the Leicestershire and Rutland County FA to develop open processes to monitor clubs and players who commit racial abuse. The response from the local FA was non committal showing little hope of any resolution, by stating ... *LRCFA already carry out an advertised process, which has been well publicised. We could certainly resend the literature and videos we already have to re-enforce these key message to help inform all clubs.*

The forum also asked the Leicestershire and Rutland County FA to share more information regarding the number of clubs and players charged each year for racism. To which they stated that... *The FA does this nationally. The County FA's don't do this publicly locally but this is something that we will take guidance from the Head of Judicial Services at the FA.*

Ivan Liburd, Chair of the BFF has said,

" The challenge we face today is that so many people are suffering from racial trauma, which can result from major experiences of racism such as hate crimes in football, or returning to a football ground where you previously received racial abuse, which can cause anxiety. This support cannot be left to untrained volunteer welfare officers within grassroots football to manage. The emotional wellbeing and safety of a child playing football cannot be confined to physical harm only. Currently there is a danger that the local football governance system is failing to safeguard children and young people in an effective way and that may be there should be an overhaul around our approach to protecting our youth."

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Ivan went on to say, "We see no strategy from our Local FA to even attempt to deal with the racist abuse of our communities. There needs to be transparency to understand where this abuse is taking place and if there are hotspot areas where equality education needs to be targeted. It is not ok to just close your eyes and expect that when you open them, things will be ok again. They will never be ok, especially if we are silent on the issues."

The forum is calling for:

- greater protection around the safeguarding and support of children and young people being abused at a grassroots level.
- open processes to monitor the number of clubs and players who commit racial abuse, and where these crimes are happening geographically.
- closer working by the FA with the Police to provide evidence to assist charging alleged offenders.

Since their October event, *At the Grass Root of Racism* and in response to that event, the Premier League have launched a National BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) advisory committee, with the aim to ensure the views of BAME players and coaches are heard, helping to inform ongoing work at a professional level. One week after the same event, the National FA advertised opportunities for Inclusion Advisory Board Members and FA Council Members to represent BAME Communities.

Ahmed Mavaria Vice Chair of the BFF, said,

"We have put ourselves out there as a forum and as a community to support the work around racism, however, the County FA have simply not been inclusive in whatever approaches they are manufacturing behind the scenes. The epidemic of racism in football is a big deal, and we believe that the Government should do more to hold football authorities to account. We will be requesting a meeting with the Minister of Sport to discuss these issues further."

In recent times in Europe, we have seen Mousa Marega of Porto FC walk off the pitch due to racism. In the UK media, we have heard comments made by former BBC pundit Craig Ramage around how Black players need pulling down a peg or two. At a local level, we have seen the manager and coach of Atherstone Town resign due to his own fans being racist towards their opposition.

At a grassroots level, County FA Inclusion Advisory Groups (IAG's), which is a group set up to advance equality of opportunity amongst all football communities and enable transparency; have never been sustained since their conception and have instead been an a group that emerges in line with annual funding streams from the National FA.

Ivan Liburd, Chair of the BFF has said,

"We would urge the Leicestershire and Rutland County FA to lean into the discomfort of having open conversations regarding race. There needs to be a genuine co-production approach to the design of new or improved projects and initiatives. We know there are real difficulties here, and that officers in key positions are committed to making positive changes in these areas. But, effective change can only be driven by gaining a better understanding of the issues, creating new partnerships, and by turning listening into effective action."

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Notes to Editor

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To read the [#ItsNotFair, Grassroots Experiences of Racism'](https://www.bamefootballforum.com/?p=160), report and recommendations, please visit <http://www.bamefootballforum.com/?p=160>

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The BAME football Forum (BFF) is a partnership of grassroots clubs and community members that have been formed to develop a network of support. The aim of the forum is to help, promote, support and encourage the development and progression of BAME football, thereby ensuring the broader needs of the football community are met.

Related articles

**ITV News** Football players as young as seven subjected to racist abuse

<https://www.itv.com/news/central/2019-10-22/grassroots-football-racial-abuse-mings-leicester-nirvana-emile-heskey-bulgaria-racism-soccer/>

**BBC News** Child footballers 'frequently racially abused', report states [https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-49525172?intlink\\_from\\_url=&](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-49525172?intlink_from_url=&)



Chair Ivan Liburd



Ahmed Mavaria Vice Chair