Essex County Football Association

Minutes of the Inclusion Advisory Group held at
County Office, Chelmsford CM2 5LB
On 28th May 2014 at 7pm

Present: Wayne Deller (WD), Daniel Patel (DP), Kirsty Clarke (KC), Karen Bush (KB), Stephen Basket (SB), Daniel Moores (DM), Dale Spiby (DS), Phil Sammons (PS), Brendan Walsh (BW) and Mark Healy (MH).

WD opened the meeting and welcomed all attending to the ECFAs inaugural Inclusion Advisory Group Meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Apologies were received from Joe Lyons (JL) and Matt Holland (MHo).

1. WD began proceeding with the election of Chairperson for the group and was informed of the only candidate and being KC, who was duly appointed.
2. KC assumed role as Chairperson and asked for an update on candidates for the role of Vice–Chair. MH advised one candidate and being SB. KC then confirmed SB in the role of Vice–Chair for the group.
3. KC asked all present to introduce themselves and please see pen portraits below ...

KC - Kirsty is a sports development professional having worked both regionally and nationally at Sport England, she is now the National Development Director at Great Britain Wheelchair Rugby. In addition to her professional role within sport she is also studying for a PhD investigating women’s football fanship.

“Having worked with a number of sports to look at how inclusivity can be maximized, I look forward to being part of the ECFA IAG. As someone who plays and manages football locally I am passionate about driving change and believe that my professional and academic skills and expertise will offer considerable contribution to ensure diversity within football can be celebrated”

SB - I have worked within the Disability, Sensory impairment; Mental Health and Learning Difficulties sector for many years. During this time I have lead on many groups in promoting equality whilst breaking down the barriers which have allowed people access services previously denied to them. I have also sat on many steering groups that have challenged all types of prejudices.

In my football coaching career I have coached from grassroots through to semi-professional, I have coached both male and female team’s youth and adults and I am currently Disability peoples coach at Watford F.C working with people of all ages with various Disabilities, Mental Health problems and Learning Difficulties. It is my vision to make football accessible to all I strongly believe and promote the meaning of the famous quote; “The biggest disability a person can have is the inability to see a person as more”.

WD - Inclusion & Equality are not just important in football but throughout society. I have friends of many different ethnic origins and sexuality and none of them play football or any other team sport as they feel excluded. This is especially true of partly disabled and LGBT
friends who do not feel able to take part because of team members harassing or abusing them.

I am very passionate that anybody who wants to participate should be not only able to do so but encouraged to do so. In the past I have refereed a small football tournament, organised by Newham Sports Council, for disabled people and it was one of the most uplifting experiences of my life. The simple gratitude shown by these boys and girls to the two of us that refereed the tournament was incredibly moving and I became determined to try and make a difference to encourage more disabled people to participate. Since being forced to use a stick to get about I have become more and more aware that so many of our football pitches and grounds are anything but disabled friendly. Narrow steep staircases with no hand rails, bumpy and uneven pathways etc. Anything I can do to improve the situation for all the underrepresented groups will be my legacy from the nearly 50 years I have been involved in football in Essex and something I and my sons can be proud of.

DP - I currently play football every week in my local town of Colchester. Age, race and player ability is mixed, but this in turn helps to ensure healthy competition avails. I originally heard about the inclusion programme whilst helping a local charity and thereafter I couldn’t resist taking part to ensure active participation is available for all parts of our ever diverse community. I’m all too aware that no matter whom you are, it can feel disheartening when someone encounters segregation or has built up an assumptive idea of particular group. I believe we can all do more to engage with all parts of our community and in as many ways as possible, by doing this effectively we can start to break down the walls that divide us and look to rebuild a more solid foundation.

In my professional life I work as a Project Manager for Insurance Company, within the Risk and Compliance sector. Within my career I am required to interpret regulation and deliver theory into practical solutions; this is something which I am very keen to bring to the forum.

KB - In my current role as the Equality and Diversity Manager at the University of Essex, I work to promote good equality and diversity practice in all aspects of the University’s activities, ensuring that the University meets its legal and reporting obligations and developing staff and student engagement with equality and diversity issues. The University of Essex is one of the UK’s most internationally diverse campus universities and I therefore have experience of working with a wide range of people who come from a variety of backgrounds and who have a variety of different experiences.

In recent years I have worked collaboratively on projects such as the development of a set of Dignity and Respect Community Principles, a study into how the University can better support staff and students with caring responsibilities and how to promote the careers of women in science, an area where we know that women are under-represented.

Being an avid football fan and having watched both my son and daughter play football at various levels over a number of years, I am aware of the challenges faced by the Essex FA in creating a truly inclusive culture within the game but I believe I can use my knowledge and experience to contribute to making a positive difference to football in Essex.

I am excited at the prospect of being involved in the Inclusion Advisory Group and am looking forward to working with other like-minded people to promote inclusion and tackle all forms of discrimination.
DS - I am the Chief Executive Officer of Southend United Community and Educational Trust. I joined Southend United in 2011 from then League Two rivals Rotherham United where I had spent 16 years, both as a player and more recently at their Community Sports Trust. I joined the Millers Football in the Community scheme in 1998 and went on to become the youngest Head of Community in the country aged just 26. During my tenure as Head of Community I led Rotherham United to win the prestigious title of ‘Community Club of the Year’ at the Football League Awards and went on to secure the club the Racial Equality Standard from Kick it Out.

I am very pleased to be contributing to the Essex FA Inclusion Advisory Group. My role for the last 16 years has been to use the power of football and the brand of a professional football club to assist in removing barriers to participation for underrepresented groups. I believe wholeheartedly that with positive interventions, we can empower communities, increase social tolerance and create a sense of belonging.

DM - I work for the IAG because I believe everyone is different but equal. I want everyone, don't matter who they are (league committees, referees, clubs, players and supporters, including members of public) to approach me in confidence with any issues. Placing myself on a number of courses through the FA and other national bodies, adding to this with over 10 years' experience working in the NHS has an investigator.

In 2005 I decided to start my own adult men's club because I wanted to change the face of football has I didn't like what I saw has a player. My club have represented in Saturday and Sunday leagues and with this I built up an excellent bond with the Essex FA, leagues, referees, clubs and players in the Southend area. Giving them my ideas on how to change their way of thinking and personality towards Grassroots football. To make the sport more enjoyable and respectful for all, don't matter who they are. With this I also become a licenced football coach and got myself involved in mini soccer and junior league teams. Coaching children of all ages, boys and girls including adults of all ages and promoting women's football has well as disability football. I coach in primary schools and high schools to help them understand how their commitment can help Grassroots football. Mentoring other coaches to change their way of thinking and to help them get the best out their team and individual players.


Currently working in the media for various outlets in both England and Ireland, notably BT Sport, Talksport and Setanta.

It is important that football is accessible to as many people as possible to widen the talent available at all levels of the game. We need to make people feel confident that discrimination can be reported and that it will be dealt with accordingly.

JL – Chief Executive, West Ham United Community Sports Trust. Football clubs have historically been criticised for various equality related issues over the past three decades, however the work of the community schemes have developed into many other sectors and areas of the past 10 years which give us a much wider overview of the communities we engage. This experience and also the leverage that the club can bring is something that we feel would benefit the IAG; it would also benefit our organisation to become a member of this
group and access the network, experience and passion from other members in a subject that is in need of much more progress and development.

4. KC invited MH to organise an IAG photo, which was completed.
5. KC invited BW to deliver a presentation on the landscapes and structures of the FA and ECFA and the National Game Strategy and County Planning process. Copies of presentation will be made available.
6. KC invited MH to deliver a presentation on Football – Inclusion & Equality, covering the FA Inclusion & Anti-Discrimination Action Plan, the role and function of the IAG, Equality Action Plan, Equality Standards for Sport, the role of the Inclusion Officer, the Equality Act 2010 and Census Data – Essex.
7. MH updated the IAG of planned Community Roadshow, an event to engage with football family and underrepresented groups. The event will showcase examples of best practise and seek the views of the audience and help shape future County Planning.

Action (1): MH asked for IAG members to advise if they could support the event (2/7/15) and confirm availability.

Action (2): KC asked MH to circulate feedback from Birmingham FA event, what worked well/what did not work well?

Action (3): KC asked MH to circulate event outline before close of play on 30/5/14 and after BW has reviewed & commented.


Action (5): KC asked MH to circulate draft questions, for the electronic survey element of the Community Roadshow to be circulated to IAG members. IAG members are asked to review and comment and feedback using group emails before Wednesday 4th June 2014 to MH.

8. KC asked if IAG members were happy to share emails among the group and all present agreed.

Action (1): MH will approach JL and MHo if they are happy to share their email addresses within the IAG.

9. KC drew the meeting to a close and confirmed the details for the next meeting as Wednesday 6th August 2014, starting at 7pm at County Office, Springfield Lyons Approach, Chelmsford CM2 5LB.

Meeting closed at 20:55 hrs.